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ABSTRACT

This manual and related 41-minute video was produced by a 3-year federally funded project to foster collaboration between special education and child care staff in early childhood programs. The approach is based on a structured, relationship-based, problem solving framework, "Going Around the Circle." The process involves five steps: (1) identifying staff-generated issues for problem solving; (2) gathering information from all concerned; (3) exploring how behavior is communicated through interactions and relationships; (4) identifying possible solutions and barriers; and (5) reviewing and evaluating the chosen plan. The first chapter introduces the themes of creating sustaining communities and relationship-building staff development. Chapter 2 focuses on using the "Going Around the Circle" model to build authentic relationships and improve staff communication. The next chapter applies the model to interactions with young children and the enhancement of classroom success. The last chapter considers the importance of supportive routines and rituals for children, staff, and families. An appendix describes application of the model in Los Angeles Children's Center programs. Handouts appropriate for staff development are attached. (Contains 12 references.) (DB)

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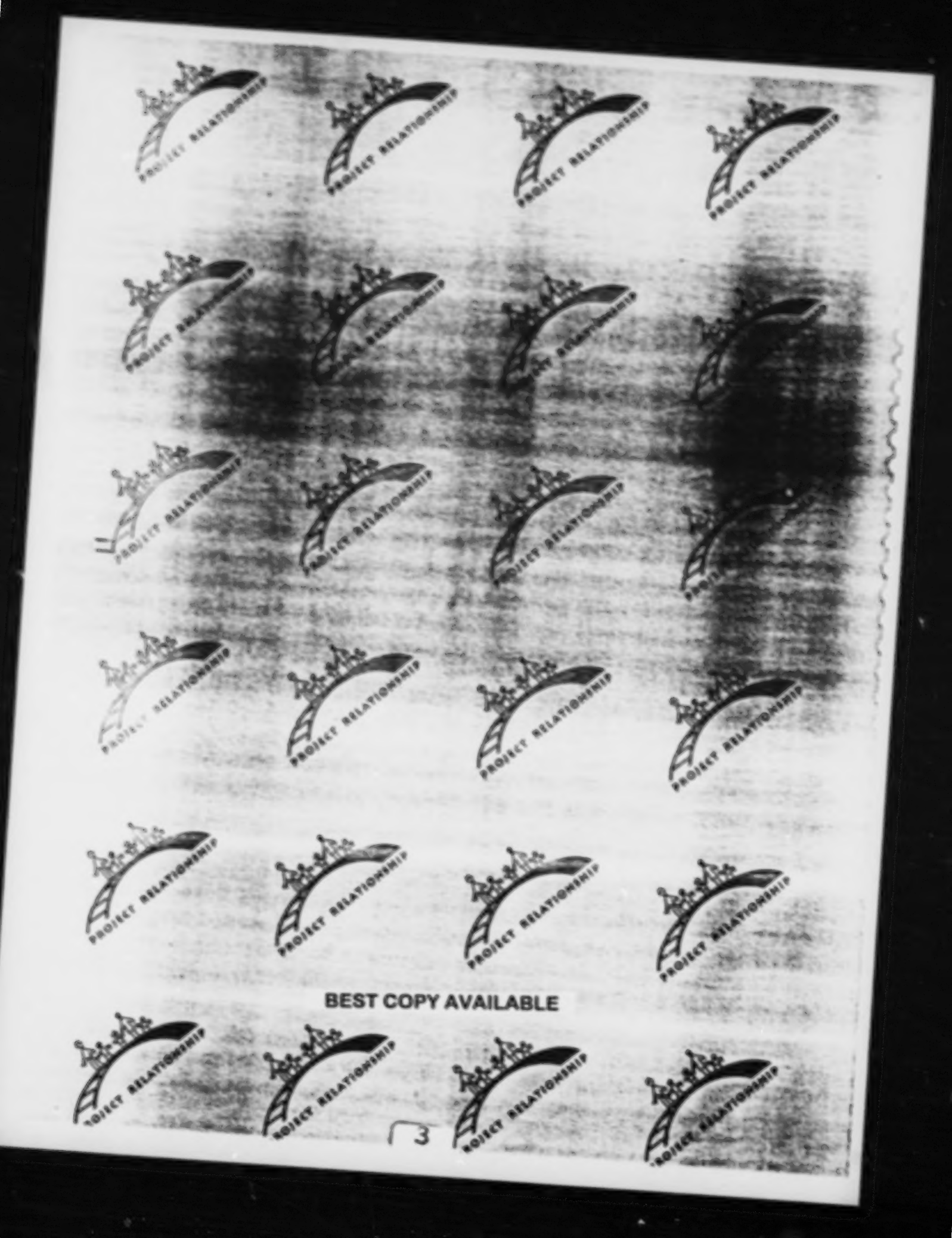

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PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

CREATING AND SUSTAINING A NURTURING COMMUNITY

A manual and video illustrating a relationship-based problem-solving framework for improving staff communication, enhancing child success and enriching program practices in early childhood settings.

1996

Los Angeles Unified School District
Division of Special Education
Infant and Preschool Programs

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The points of view expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the U. S. Department of Education, California State Department of Education or Los Angeles Unified School District. No official endorsement should be inferred.

This manual is designed for duplication to share as handouts without cost.
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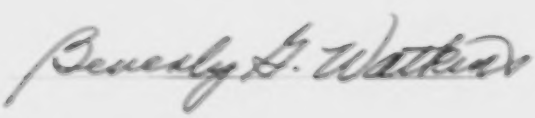

Beverly G. Watkins, Director
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PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

CREATING AND SUSTAINING A NURTURING COMMUNITY

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To the Children and Families
of the Los Angeles Unified School District

Rebecca

PREFACE

Teachers and administrators from early childhood programs across the country voice concern about the changes in community life that ultimately place children's development at risk. They talk about increasing numbers of children with challenging behavior. They emphasize that time to meet and solve problems is a necessity. They request support in facilitating communication and implementing program practices that are consistent, appropriate, and nurturing for children, families and each other.

The production of the Project Relationship video and accompanying manual culminates a five-year, federally-funded project developed within the Los Angeles Unified School District to address these concerns. The video and manual illustrate a structured relationship-based problem solving framework developed by special education and child care staff known as "Going Around the Circle." Using this framework to address day-to-day challenges has improved staff communication, enriched early childhood program practices, and increased the successful inclusion of young children who are having difficulty coping with the demands of being in group care.

The video is to be used as a training tool in an inservice setting. It includes an introduction and three illustrations. While we think there is value in watching the video in its entirety, it was designed to be shown in three distinct segments. Therefore, background information is repeated at the beginning of each illustration. The intent is to pause the tape and generate discussions that lead to new adaptations.

The companion manual parallels the video. The three illustrations highlighted in the video are analyzed using the "Going Around the Circle" framework. These examples are

intended to be a catalyst for further discussion and are expected to increase the reader's understanding of the philosophical underpinnings and the practical applications of relationship-based problem solving. For your convenience in a training situation, critical information in the manual has been reformatted as handouts and can be found in the back of the manual.

It is our sincere wish that these materials be used in your efforts to build respectful, responsive, relationships among children, parents, and staff. We believe that by sharing our acquired expertise and experiences, we contribute to a wisdom that promotes success for all children in early childhood programs.

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CHAPTER 1

PROJECT RELATIONSHIP: CREATING AND SUSTAINING A NURTURING COMMUNITY

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PROJECT RELATIONSHIP: CREATING AND SUSTAINING A NURTURING COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

Project Relationship was developed to enhance the collaboration between special education and child care staff, in order to provide support and training that would increase classroom success for young children who are having difficulty coping with child care expectations. Project Relationship is based on the belief that respectful, responsive relationships among staff, parents, and children are necessary to create and sustain a nurturing early childhood program.

Child care has been designed to provide security and nurturing to thousands of young children, allowing their parents to work or go to school knowing that their children will be safe. As such, child care centers have become an integral part of many communities.

In recent years, child care has begun to serve young children who have developmental vulnerabilities, delays, and disabilities that need special attention in order for them to thrive. Children with delays and disabilities may face more challenges than their non-disabled peers. This makes it difficult for many of them to cope with the demands and expectations of the program. Now that more families are choosing to have their children with disabilities included in publicly funded child care, preparing child care providers with the training and supports needed to meet these children's special needs is essential.

In addition, significant changes in American life have resulted in many children growing up with family and community situations that place their health and development at risk. In many early childhood programs, families are dealing with issues of poverty, drug use, and community violence that affect the development of children and their

"Project Relationship enabled us to really meet the needs of special children, which I don't think we could have done before, or which perhaps we did, but not in as successful a way as we're doing now."

Victoria Stevens
Children's Center Principal

"The increase in poverty in the community is contributing to the increase of child and family stress."

Shizuko Akasaki
Administrative Coordinator

STRESSORS AFFECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- **Teenage parenthood**
- **Unsupported single parenthood**
- **Marital discord**
- **Incarcerated parents**
- **Psychiatric illness**
- **Overcrowding**
- **Social isolation**
- **Out of home separations**
- **An overwhelming cost of living**
- **Family substance abuse**
- **Gang activity**
- **Community violence**
- **Domestic violence**

"We came to the Center Monday and found bullet holes in our classroom wall."

Victoria Stevens
Children's Center Principal

"It comes out in their play. In the block area outside we might see them build a bus; and if a staff member asks them where they are going, they will say to the county jail."

Jackie Williams
Children's Center Principal

capacity to cope with child care center demands. Many parents worry about the safety of their children, and yet they are also confronted with the necessity of finding child care so they may be employed or prepared for employment.

Consequently, many children are coming into child care with experiences that have been difficult, chaotic, frightening, and/or confusing. When experiences are unpredictable and chaotic, children become preoccupied with keeping themselves safe. They may have difficulty coping with the expectations of the classroom because they are also emotionally dealing with the repercussions of disability, family and community poverty, discord, substance abuse, and violence. When young children are stressed, they are not free to explore their environment, to relate, to discover, and to learn.

Many child care teachers report feeling overwhelmed by the numbers of young children with diverse and special needs that require added individualized attention. They request strategies for communicating more effectively among themselves, for responding to young children's challenging behaviors, and for developing program practices that meet individual needs in a group setting.

Los Angeles Unified School District responded to these needs by supporting the development of a collaborative relationship between the Division of Child Development and the Division of Special Education, Infant and Preschool Programs. Preschool special education teachers were placed within the District's Children's Center classrooms on an itinerant basis to help meet the needs of identified special education children.

PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

Project Relationship utilizes a structured relationship-based problem solving framework that helps staff address issues and events that affect program functioning and child adjustment. This framework, which came to be called "Going Around the Circle," fosters a process of inquiry, respect, and reflection that focuses on issues at hand and the staff's capacity to come up with solutions that appreciate individual differences and respond to individual needs.

Fundamental to this approach is the belief that authentic, reciprocal relationships are built on trust, openness, honesty, and genuine concern for all those involved. When the staff work within this context they come to recognize the unique contribution relationships have in identifying concerns for discussion, in problem solving, in making decisions, and in enriching program practices for children, staff, and families.

PHILOSOPHICAL BELIEFS OF THE PROJECT

Basic philosophical beliefs of Project Relationship are:

- Each Children's Center has its own unique culture based on the diversity of individuals that make up the child care community: parents, children, child care, and special education staff.

- Supportive relationships among child care personnel, families, and children are the foundation of quality care for young children. Staff, parent, and child feelings are real and legitimate and need to be recognized and acknowledged.

- The quality of relationships within the Children's Center is dependent upon respect for individual differences and responsiveness to the individual needs of those within the child care community.

- All Children's Center challenges need to be reframed in the context of child, family, and staff relationships and the demands inherent in the Center setting.

"And if we feel comfortable with each other, the bottom line is that the children benefit from us working together, getting along together, understanding...the children are the ones who benefit from us."

Sally Juarez
Children's Center Aide

"The project gave us additional support in understanding psychosocial issues, and that helped build a bridge between special education and the children's centers."

Abby Wanamaker
Speech and Language Specialist

Magaly

STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS MOST EFFECTIVE:

- *when it is based on the collective knowledge and experiences of the staff rather than the knowledge of an outside expert*
- *when it is based on meeting the realistic problems that are encountered in the child care community*
- *when it occurs within the context of addressing one's beliefs and values, attitudes, goals, needs, and wants*
- *when it occurs within a climate that encourages free expression of ideas and honest feedback from the group*

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Implementing these values within a child center requires a different strategy for staff development. The new staff development approach is based on the realization that the traditional model, composed of presentations by child development and special education experts, is not an effective way to promote, enhance, or change teacher attitude and skills. The traditional model sets up a relationship of an expert and a seeker of information and does not address the importance that individual beliefs play in the acquisition of new attitudes and new skills. Best practices of staff development today include training and support based on the notion that a change of teacher attitudes and the promotion of teacher skills needs to be based on understanding the adult learner's values, beliefs, culture, experience, and style of learning.

Project Relationship is not used to train the staff in a particular way to work with children and families. Rather, facilitators build environments of trust and respect so the diverse opinions, feelings, and expertise can be shared in an authentic way. Relationships are acknowledged as a critical component for the implementation of intervention strategies. The facilitator supports the staff in developing solutions by asking questions which help the staff to draw on their day-to-day needs and experiences, both successes and failures, to solve problems.

THREE CENTRAL CHALLENGES

During the initial implementation of the Project, special education personnel and child care teachers met to collaborate on the development of the relationship-based problem solving approach. They engaged in discussions regarding the challenges facing child care centers in large, urban communities. Staff discussion revealed central themes for which they requested further training and support.

1. Foremost was how to increase the successful inclusion of the many young children who are having difficulty coping with the demands of being in group care for an extended period of time each day. Teachers asked for assistance in how to help children with challenging behaviors be successful within the classroom setting.

2. Staff members identified interpersonal communication with each other and interpersonal communication between special education staff and child care teachers as being critical issues. Staff reported that unresolved conflicts and unproductive patterns of communication interfere with the quality of care provided in the Center. They felt there was an immediate need to improve staff communication which had been identified as a crucial factor in staff morale and burn-out.

3. The third critical area identified was related to developing and implementing predictable program practices. Personalized interactions, authentic relationships, and supportive program routines and rituals were recognized as essential to create and sustain a nurturing community for staff, children, and families.

"One of the most enriching components of the project is the opportunity for special education and child care teachers, along with family members, to share observations and exchange information. The traditional model of the professional acting as the 'expert' no longer exists; roles are fully integrated and team decisions are made. Of particular importance are the feelings and cultural beliefs of each family."

Anita Amos
Preschool Special Education Teacher

"Meeting regularly helped me to refine, clarify and learn from others' examples."

Mae Wesley
Children's Center Aide

Diana

BUILDING AUTHENTIC STAFF RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRES:

- *consistent meeting times on an ongoing basis*
- *administrative support for adult learning*
- *designated facilitators who value staff input*
- *a process of problem solving that encourages inquiry, respect, and reflection*
- *some manner of record keeping*

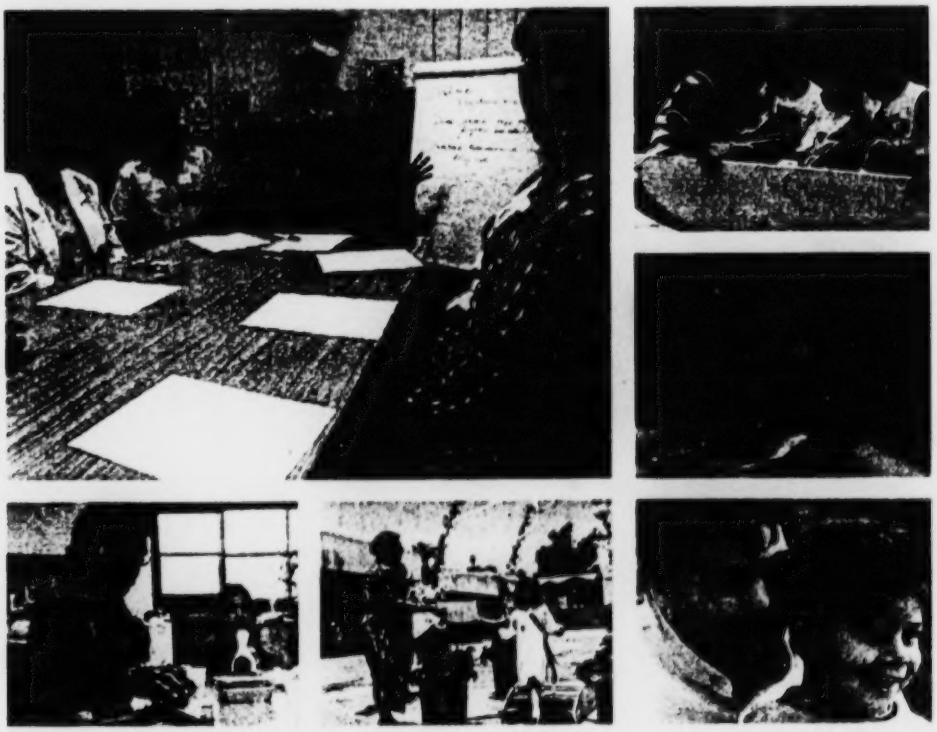
THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

Three stories will be presented that illustrate the applications of the relationship-based problem solving framework called "Going Around the Circle" developed by the Los Angeles Unified School District's Division of Special Education, Infant and Preschool Programs and Division of Child Development's administrators and staff members to:

- improve staff communication
- enhance classroom success for young children
- enrich program practices for children, staff, and families

CHAPTER 2

BUILDING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS TO IMPROVE STAFF COMMUNICATION



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BUILDING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS TO IMPROVE STAFF COMMUNICATION

Staff must have predictable ways to build authentic relationships that directly address the daily challenges that require decisions, as well as the interpersonal issues that may lead to staff disagreement or division.

NEED TO SUPPORT STAFF COMMUNICATION

Child care teachers are individuals with diverse cultural and religious beliefs and values who come together on a daily basis to create a harmonious, supportive community for children who are in their care. Their diversity may be reflected in differing views about child rearing and in differing ways of interpreting the child's development of autonomous, independent, compliant, and exploratory behaviors. Working with children and families stirs up feelings and relationship issues for the child care teachers. The child care staff needs to understand the influence one's own temperament, values, experience, and development have on one's interactions with children, family, and staff. It is equally important to understand the perspectives of colleagues and to directly address issues that may place the harmony of the child care community in jeopardy. Project Relationship acknowledges that diversity exists in learning styles, experiences, values, beliefs, and the expressions of emotions. The relationship-based problem solving framework addresses these differences and has the flexibility to be staff generated and site specific.

Samantha

"...having the chance to meet together on a regular basis really provides the staff with a sense of security and trust."

Susan Burlando
Children's Center Principal

"I think the project helps staff by allowing them a chance to express their feelings, to be open about things that ordinarily they would not be so open about."

Maland Jackson
Speech and Language Specialist

EFFECTIVE FACILITATORS:

- **listen**
- **value staff input**
- **make observations**
- **ask open-ended questions**
- **model own humanness**
- **provide support**
- **make suggestions**
- **keep records public**

BUILDING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

A necessary first step in establishing authentic relationships is achieving trust. To do this requires work on two different levels: the operational and the interpersonal. Both require administrative support. Trust is achieved operationally among the staff when a structure for communication is provided for staff to meet together at a time that is consistent, predictable, and mutually agreed upon by the participants. Regularly scheduled meeting times are fundamental to the establishment of staff communication. Problems can be identified immediately by the staff and dealt with on an ongoing basis, rather than be allowed to build up. The commitment of time and interest is a major indicator of staff and administration respect for the communication process and for each other.

Trust is achieved interpersonally among the staff when the quality of the communication is direct, honest, and supportive. Interpersonal trust among staff members can be expedited when the designated facilitator takes an authentic interest, listens, values staff input, makes observations, asks open-ended questions, models one's own humanness, provides support, and makes suggestions.

The facilitator always starts "where the staff is." One Center's staff may be more comfortable, at first, using meeting time to talk about a child with challenging behavior. Another Center's staff may wish to concentrate on problematic program issues, while still another Center's staff might be quite ready to discuss staff-to-staff interaction. The issues addressed are in response to the immediate needs of the staff. Solutions are based on inquiry (addressing concerns, asking questions, getting information), respect (sharing ideas, listening, supporting feelings and opinions, making plans), and reflection (assessing outcome and recalling one's own influences). Thus, the generated concerns and solutions are site specific and site unique. Records of decision making are carefully kept in order to establish precedents for the unique approaches devised by the group. Trust is enhanced by record keeping being conducted in an open, visual, communal, public way.

As confidence is built, staff members' responses to the issues raised change over time. Initially, they identify the concern to be addressed. Then they analyze why the problem might be happening, and suggest changes that could be made. Finally, they reflect on adaptations they might make in their own behavior that would contribute to more successful outcomes.

"It is important that everyone is considered a teacher. We all have responsibility for the children."

Sandra Smother
Children's Center Aide

Monica

YOU KNOW YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY WHEN...

Markers of Progress with Staff Communication

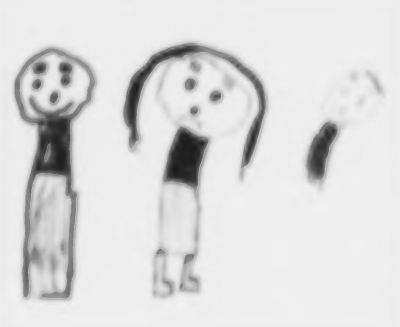
There are several markers which define how well a staff is learning to use the relationship-based problem solving process:

- ❑ Staff members choose time, frequency, and schedule of meetings
- ❑ Staff members arrive on time for meetings
- ❑ Staff members set the agenda
- ❑ All staff members participate
- ❑ Discussion stems from staff-generated issues and is not based on administrative decisions
- ❑ Staff members share problems, feelings, and opinions
- ❑ Staff members voice a sense of ownership regarding the solution to Center problems
- ❑ Staff members listen to each other
- ❑ Staff members provide authentic feedback to each other
- ❑ Non-verbal cues are acknowledged
- ❑ Staff members begin to use common language, rituals, and "in-jokes."
- ❑ Discussion remains focused
- ❑ Conflict is recognized as a normal aspect of staff interaction and is addressed as an opportunity to exchange and clarify points of view
- ❑ Source of conflict is examined
- ❑ Staff members ask for clarification of messages that are unclear or that have double meanings
- ❑ Staff members express concerns in a constructive manner
- ❑ Facilitator role is shared by other members of the staff
- ❑ Problems are clearly defined
- ❑ Alternatives are explored
- ❑ Decisions are reached and supported
- ❑ Records are kept accurately
- ❑ Decisions are re-evaluated and modified if necessary

ILLUSTRATION 1:
IMPROVING STAFF COMMUNICATION

This segment illustrates how the relationship-based problem solving format called "Going Around the Circle" is used to solve problems, build responsive relationships, and improve staff communication.

Since the beginning of the year, Roz, the special education teacher, had been meeting with the child care center staff twice a month. Some of the staff from each room met in the morning and others met in the afternoon. Staff members provided coverage for each other so they could meet. Roz opened the morning meeting reviewing the minutes.



Gabriel

Roz: Since the last time we met, what's happened to Angel and his mom?

Mary: After the last meeting, I took time and personally invited Angel's mom to come to the Center. She's been coming on Thursdays, during her lunch hour, and Angel seems to like having his mother here.

Robert: She told me she was feeling bad because she couldn't come earlier in the day; she thought there was no way she could participate in Angel's school until you gave her that idea, Mary.

Roz: Good for you Mary! And good for Angel, too. It's been a little while since we got together. Any new concerns? What should we look at today?

Virginia: Communication among staff.

Roz was aware of changes in staff assignments and that there was increasing tension between the morning and afternoon staff members. Irma was the afternoon teacher in the blue room. She had been at the center for 12 years.

She shared children, the room and materials with Aida, the well-liked teacher in the morning. This had been the arrangement for six years. They had a good working relationship, valued each other as professionals and were comfortable with sharing activities, ideas, and information. Recently, Aida transferred to another center closer to her home. The staff was sad to see her go and some of the them planned a small spur-of-the-moment party to say good-bye.

Her position was filled by Maria, a 24-year-old, highly recommended graduate from the community college. She had worked in other child care programs for four years, but this was her first position as a teacher. There was no formal welcome and Maria met the staff as they came to work.

Initially the transition seemed to be going smoothly, but before long there was friction which began to escalate. Issues of how materials would be shared and stored, where the children's projects could be kept, and when and who would change art work all became the significant, real-world challenges that needed resolution.

Roz: What's happening in this area? What is giving you cause for concern?

Sally: I think it's lack of communication.

Roz: Why do you think it's happening? How it that manifesting itself? What are you seeing?

Sally: If something is going on in the morning and we come in and someone neglects to let us afternoon staffers know what's going on, then we're lost. We are not aware of what is going on, say, for a special event.

Roz: Like Aida's good-bye party?

Virginia: Yes, some of us were not in on the plan.

Sally: Or like, say, with a child.

"GOING AROUND THE CIRCLE"

This framework provides opportunity for staff to:

- **focus on the issue**
- **take turns**
- **contribute their ideas**
- **listen to perspectives of others**
- **engage in problem solving**

Mary and Maria stared at the floor and Irma rolled her eyes while writing something on her pad of paper.

Robert: Sometimes we don't get information. Like yesterday when Natalie's father told a morning person that she had been up during the night because her mother was taken to the hospital. It really makes me irritated. Our job is harder if people don't tell us what's going on. This wouldn't have happened if Aida were still here.

On an easel behind her, Roz was noting comments and concerns made by each person. As staff became more animated and all started talking at once, Roz suggested they use "Going Around the Circle" to:

- focus on the issue
- take turns
- contribute their ideas
- listen to perspectives of others
- engage in problem solving.

Mary: And we never know if we are going to have a substitute.

Roz: Why do you think this is happening?

Sybil: Things are different. I guess we don't know what to do. Or we don't know the process of how to say what we want to say. Things have changed.

Sally: We did have a good procedure. We had what you call a communication book. And each room has a communication book, or should have one. And, say, if something went on in the morning, Aida would write this down in the communication book and the afternoon staff should be able to go to this communication book and find out what went on in the morning.

Breana

Roz: Where is the book? Is the book something that is centrally located?

Virginia: It's in each room. Each room has a communication book.

Robert: I have to remember to read it everyday when I come in!

Mary: Me, too.

Tina: It sure makes things easier for me if I read what's in there!

Mary: Some communication is better since Susan hung the clipboard in her office.

Robert: What is the clipboard used for?

Sally: For things we need her to know. As the administrator, Susan needs to know when supplies are low, if we need to call maintenance, or if there's a message from a parent.

Mary: It can also used for requests for vacation or changes in schedules.

Susan: It's been great for me; it helps me be more efficient. You know I can use all the help I can get! I'll show you where it is, Maria. Speaking of communication, I have the new calendar for the staff lounge. It's big enough to write on. Remember all of you can/should write on it. Write events such as meetings and vacations. It will be centrally located for everyone.

Roz: Great! Those both sound like good strategies. But I want to get back to the communication book. It sounds like the book is not being used like it was in the past. Is the

Kameron

past when Aida was here? I wonder about some of the other changes that have occurred in this program since Aida left and Maria arrived. How many of you knew Aida was leaving? Maria, how was it for you, coming to a new center?

Tina: I didn't know she was leaving.

Irma: Yes you did. I told you.

Maria: It didn't seem like anyone knew I was coming here. No one knew my name and I wasn't introduced to other teachers. I still don't know everyone who works in the morning or where I am supposed to store my supplies and activities.

Roz: I'm hearing a couple of different things. One, there are some real strategies set up to facilitate communication among staff. For instance the clipboard in the Administrator's office, the communication book in each room, and the calendar in the staff lounge. However, these are not being used very much right now. So I wonder if there might be something else. I'm wondering about feelings you might be having about Aida's leaving. Some of you were left out of saying good-bye. From the other side of the coin, what about Maria? How must it feel to be a new teacher in this setting?

Tina: It's like Aida's 'good-bye' wasn't communicated very well and neither was Maria's 'hello.'

Mary: I don't like changes!

Roz: I'm sure many of you still have feelings or thoughts about the change…having to adjust to a new teacher's style after being used to Aida.

Virginia: I miss her.

Sally: We have to find ways to get better communication between the morning and the afternoon staff.

Robert: I'm glad we are talking about the problem. It's hard, but I think this is how we get to a solution.

Sybil: Maybe this is the way.

Irma: Sometimes it gets so hectic, I just can't seem to find the time to write in the communication book everyday.

Tina: Would it help if we put the book in a better location and maybe attached a pencil on a string?

Susan: Remember, it's not just one person's responsibility to write in the book; everyone needs to write in it and read it.

Robert: When I come in, is it okay if I remind you to write in it before you leave Irma?

Maria: You know, it's hard to come into a new setting and not know where things are kept, or any of the children's names...please help!

Mary: I can see your point, Maria. I hadn't thought of that.

Irma: I can show you where the communication book is kept, Maria.

Roz: I'm wondering if the Center has a consistent way or plan for saying hello or good-bye.

When staff members or children enter or leave the center, are there rituals or traditions?

Sybil: Maybe at some meeting we could talk about how we can better plan hellos and good-byes for the children and the staff.

Maria: Maybe I could help write up some information to give a substitute teacher coming here for the first time…like answers to the questions I had when I first got here.

Mary: I still want to have a better system for finding out if there is going to be a substitute.

Roz: Let me make sure I get these suggestions down on the easel. Let's see. For the next time:

- ✓ Planning for "Comings and Goings"
- ✓ Planning for Substitutes

THE PROBLEM

The staff was concerned about the breakdown of communication regarding: the children in their care, getting information shared between morning and afternoon staff, planning staff events, and being notified if there were going to be substitutes. The problems that grew regarding Aida's good-bye party and between Irma and Maria represent what can happen when patterns of communication in the Center are not inclusive, open, and direct. Unresolved feelings about small issues tend to snowball until tension replaces harmony as the climate of the setting.

When Maria came to the Center, she was welcomed by most of the staff, but there was no orientation or discussion about how things are done and how things might change with a new team member. Instead it was business as usual, with Maria having to figure out and accept the old ways of doing things.

The lack of a direct system of communication also affected those teachers who were not included in Aida's farewell, because they were not around when it was being planned. These interpersonal issues most likely were addressed because Roz framed them within the bigger and safer issues of general communication.

THE PROCESS

Roz started the meeting by exploring what was on the minds of the participants. She did not come in with a self-conceived notion of what "needed" to be discussed. This staff felt the need to address staff communication. Another staff might use the meeting time to talk about a child with challenging behaviors. Still another might begin by addressing problematic program issues, such as staff schedules, transition time, setting up activities, and clean-up duties.

The method that Roz, as facilitator, used became known as "Going Around the Circle." This framework was developed by the participants at this site and helped them focus on the issues at hand. It encouraged each staff member to comment, regardless of seniority, credential, or role definition. It ensured that there was an equal playing field on which the more vocal, or more articulate, or more assertive members did not dominate or unduly influence the process when critical issues were discussed and important decisions were made. Individual staff members were given equal opportunity to provide input. Facilitators found moving from person to person around the circle was helpful. Roz guided the staff by:

- Polling staff feelings, knowledge, and opinions in defining the problem to be addressed.
- Building bridges of staff communication through the acknowledgment of staff similarities and differences, and framing questions that help participants capitalize on their own expertise.
- Creating a process that focuses on staff expertise and experience in the problem solving process.

"GOING AROUND THE CIRCLE"

"Going Around the Circle" addresses five principles that support inquiry, respect, and reflection. Let's look more closely at Illustration 1 and examine examples of the questions and responses in this relationship-based problem solving framework.

1. **Identifying staff-generated issues for problem solving.**
   Facilitator asked:
   What's the concern? What's new? What shall we talk about today?
   Staff responded:
   ...lack of staff communication
   ...how materials are shared and stored
   ...not being included in plans for the good-bye party
   ...parent information that is not shared
   ...notification regarding substitutes

2. **Gathering information from all concerned so that the problem is stated from all points of view.**
   Facilitator asked:
   Why do you think it is happening? What's your viewpoint on why this is happening?"
   Staff responded:
   ...established procedures not used anymore
   ...poor system of communication between morning and afternoon staff
   ...things not done as they used to be

3. **Recognizing all behavior is communication by asking participants to explore the interactions and relationships of the staff, families, and children involved.**
   Facilitator asked:
   What do you think this behavior is communicating? What is being communicated?
   Staff responded:
   ...some of us were left out of saying good-bye
   ...lots of changes

"...I realized that what I needed to do was figure out the questions to ask."

Lisbeth Vincent
Project Evaluator

"Pacing is important. Make sure to keep the dialogue going so everyone has an initial turn. Remind people you will go around the circle again. You have to be careful that if you insert opinions from your point of view, state clearly that that is what you are doing so it doesn't cut off the dialogue."

Roz Lieberman
Preschool Special Education Teacher

"As someone new to the role of a facilitator, it's hard not to jump in and fix things, be the expert. When I pull back, it invites other's ideas and the decisions are shared."

Carole Crooke Whitlock
Preschool Special Education Teacher

Jonah

...it's like Aida's good-bye wasn't communicated very well and neither was Maria's hello
...I miss her

4. **Discussing possible solutions and barriers in order to reach consensus about a potential course of action.**
   Facilitator asked:
   How can we help? What's the plan? Who will do what?
   Staff responded:
   ...remember to use the communication book and clipboard
   ...talk about problems and feelings
   ...develop a plan of substitute notification
   ...improve general communication plan
   ...take time to read the communication book daily
   ...acquaint Maria with program procedures
   ...explain use of clipboard to Maria
   ...encourage everyone to write on the new calendar
   ...offer to be a part of writing up information for new teachers

And in subsequent meetings:

5. **Reviewing the process and evaluating and modifying the plan as necessary**
   Facilitator asked:
   How's it going?
   In this illustration, the facilitator, Roz, recorded on an easel agenda items to be discussed for the next meeting:

For the next time
✓ Planning for "Comings and Goings"
✓ Planning for Substitutes

WHAT MAKES IT WORK?

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The facilitator is a member of the group who regards the staff as a gathering of individuals who have the experience and knowledge to address problems through their own understanding of the situation and the interchange of information. Facilitators help by directing the process of the meeting. The content is determined by the group itself. The facilitator approach to staff development is based on the belief that the staff members have the capability to solve Center problems based on their collective wisdom and experience.

The facilitator helps to create an environment by supporting the principles of adult learning and relationship-based problem solving and by providing validity to each member's contribution to the group process.

The facilitator is responsible to see that all members of the staff have the opportunity to participate and to keep those who talk more readily from monopolizing the process. Keeping the discussion focused, clarifying sentences, restating ideas, and summarizing main points are part of the facilitator role.

The facilitator reframes the issues from each individual's perspective. This inquiry and reflection stems from the belief that people and relationships will change based on an understanding of self and the needs of all involved in the situation. This approach focuses on working effectively with adults in order to build a team that can work together to solve problems as they arise. The format can be facilitated by any member of the child care staff, including program administrator, early childhood teacher, or special educator.

CHECKLIST FOR FACILITATORS

- ❒ **Are meeting times predictable?**
- ❒ **Has a ritual been developed and followed for opening and closing the meeting?**
- ❒ **Have you remembered to ask more questions and make fewer statements?**
- ❒ **How was trust encouraged?**
- ❒ **How was the expertise of the staff validated?**
- ❒ **How was record keeping accomplished?**

"Record keeping is crucial. It validates input, contributes to the culture of the community, preserves ideas that are stimulated, and, used as a review of the previous meeting, focuses the group and leads to new discussions."

Ruth Hosch
Speech and Language Specialist

FACILITATOR TECHNIQUES TO ASSIST INQUIRY AND REFLECTION

There are several techniques that can help the facilitator serve as a model of effective communication and promote constructive communication among staff members.

- **SUPPORTING**
  Validates the importance of each individual's contribution.
  Example: "That's an interesting point. I haven't thought about it that way. You have such a nice way of saying things, Judy."

- **CLARIFYING**
  Helps check the accuracy and underlying message of a comment.
  Example: "I'm not certain I understand what you mean. Would you please go over that again? It sounds upsetting. How did you react when..."

- **QUESTIONING**
  Enhances dialogue when one feels direct answers are being requested or that comments given are ambiguous or incomplete.
  Example: "I hear you saying two things. Which is more important to you? Are you saying we shouldn't meet regularly because our schedules are too complicated or that you don't think it is worthwhile?"

- **REFOCUSING**
  Bringing a wide-ranging group discussion back to central issues.
  Example: "What as a group should we do? Addie, what are your thoughts on re-scheduling the meetings?"

- **TRANSITIONING**
  Assists in giving all members of the group an equal opportunity to participate when one member contributes more than the others.
  Example: "Your comments really made us think, Michael, and I wonder what others might like to add."

- **SENDING I-MESSAGES**
  Provides a way to deal with a negative situation without accusing.
  Example: "I wonder how it feels when suggestions are ignored?"

- **RELATING**
  Allows staff to draw upon past experiences to solve or address present problems.
  Example: "How can our ritual of saying good-bye to the children apply to this situation of saying good-bye to a teacher leaving the school?"

- **CHECKING**
  Allows the opportunity for the needs of all group members to be heard.
  Example: "How are things going?" "Any ruffled feathers?"

- **SUMMARIZING**
  Pulls together related ideas and restates the suggestions that have been discussed.
  Example: "What ideas have we discussed about planning Tina's good-bye party?"

- **CONSENSUS REACHING**
  Allows for a "trial balloon" summarizing the group's discussion.
  Example: "It sounds like we have decided to use the 'Crossing the Bridge' ritual to say good-bye to Tina, just as we do for the children who are leaving. Is that correct?"

- **STORY TELLING**
  Illustrates important points, triggers emotions, and personalizes experiences.
  Example: "I remember a time when..." or "Do you remember when...?"

"Having ongoing, regularly scheduled meetings, you get used to each other. We are all individuals. There are fewer hurt feelings."

Aida Sybil
Children's Center Teacher

It's important to keep notes. It's a concrete way to validate the process of coming together. I liked to write notes on the easel. Later I typed them up and gave them back to the staff. Doing this helped me to focus for the next meeting. But balancing taking notes and engaging the staff at the same time is a challenge. It takes a while to find your own style of keeping records."

Rose Lieberman
Preschool Special Education Teacher

Canoe

ROLE OF RECORDER

The importance of recording significant issues that are discussed and decisions that are made by the staff cannot be overstated. One hundred percent of the Centers indicated that they valued both easel notes taken during the meeting and receiving a typed personal copy. Staff members saw this as a concrete way to validate individual input. Meeting notes completed in such a manner that they are viewed simultaneously; e.g., easel, blackboard, give weight to the value of individual contribution.

How records will be noted, who will do them and where they will be kept needs to be decided by the group. Some facilitators conducted meetings and took notes at the same time. Others divided the duties. Still others rotated the role of facilitator and record-keeper on a bi-monthly basis. Blackboards, charts, easels, and laptop computers were used at the various centers. Some centers handed out minutes from the previous meetings. Others posted the minutes or kept a centrally-located binder with all the minutes for easy reference.

ROLE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Administrative support is essential in meeting these identified staff needs and for the successful implementation of a relationship-based staff development approach. Regularly scheduled interactions among staff members may pose a significant challenge in many child care centers. Due to the complexity of staff schedules, administrative leadership is necessary to set aside time for regularly scheduled meetings and a comfortable environment that promotes interaction and the exchange of ideas.

A stated goal of the UMSD Children's Centers is to promote local autonomy. Each Center differs in its decision making process. Each Center administrator needs to clarify the authority for staff decision making. Some staff members have found it helpful for administrators to write down these

decisions that can be made alone, those requiring administrative approval, and those for which the staff serves as consultants.

Administrative support is also required for the implementation of staff-generated solutions. This may include arranging for parent meetings or allowing flexibility in staff schedules.

ROLE OF STAFF

The site-specific, staff-generated approach of Project Relationship is based on the notion that changes in the child care center will only occur when the principles of adult learning are honored. Members of the staff see the need for change as critical to the best interests of the children, staff, and parents in the child care community. Fundamental to Project Relationship is the critical role that staff plays in all facets of decision making, including agreement to meet on a regularly scheduled basis. Other responsibilities include:

- identifying issues to be addressed
- expressing ideas, needs, and feelings
- defining obstacles to solutions
- brainstorming solutions based on the collective experience and knowledge of the individual group members
- participating in decision making
- giving support for the implementation of mutual decisions

STRATEGIES USED BY STAFF TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Calendar
- *For special events, staff meetings, and teachers' work schedules located where all staff can write on it*

Notes
- *For personal/private messages and greetings*

Communication Book
- *For documentation of important things staff coming to work need to know (illness, messages from families, activity schedule)*

Staff Meetings
- *For informal planning of activities, discussions of children/families or for more formal presentations and planning of center-based activities*

Clipboard
- *For alerting an administrator about the need for maintenance, information from parents, or events surrounding an incident that may require follow-up*

Staff Mailboxes
- *For personal mail and announcements*

Sign in
- *For notices to be clipped into time cards*

ONE CENTER'S SOLUTION: MONTE VISTA'S COMMUNICATION CLIPBOARD

Staff communication was a central issue at Monte Vista Children's Center. The days were 12 hours long with many shifts. Teachers were busy and didn't always have (or use) established procedures to communicate with the administrator or with the staff in other classrooms on a regular basis. The "Going Around the Circle" problem-solving process was used to generate a list of different strategies for staff-to-staff communication at the Center. These discussions identified a need for a better way to communicate Center needs with the administrator. This resulted in the purchase of a clipboard that was located in the administrator's office for all the staff to use. Over the year, the staff used the communication clipboard to:

- leave personal messages: "I need to talk with you"
- notify administrator of requests for materials
- communicate events surrounding an incident that may require follow-up, e.g., child accident, one child hurts another child's personal belongings lost or damaged
- convey information regarding a substitute
- request changes in schedules
- relay parent messages to administrator

Rebecca

CHAPTER 3

INCREASING PERSONALIZED INTERACTION TO ENHANCE CLASSROOM SUCCESS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INCREASING PERSONALIZED INTERACTION TO ENHANCE CLASSROOM SUCCESS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Child care centers serve families year-round from dawn to dusk. This means that young children and child care staff spend long hours together. These adults are called upon to give nurturing responses to meet the social and emotional needs of young children for the majority of their waking hours. Therefore, care must be familiar, predictable, and personalized; relationships must be nourished, respected, and sustained; and young children must be made to feel safe, valued, and competent.

Transition from home to child care can be difficult for a young child. The quality of child care is dependent upon the quality of relationship that develops between an individual child and particular caregiver. Children can create new bonds with child care teachers if the child and particular caregiver share predictable emotional experiences over time. Personalized individual attention to young children is crucial. Personal connections through the use of touch, eye contact, names, personalized hellos and good-byes, and time to share intimate experiences must be built into each day for each child. The short term investment of intense personalized teacher time results in fewer of the classroom interruptions needed to help the child with ongoing coping difficulties.

ADULTS ARE NOT INTERCHANGEABLE

Fundamental to Project Relationship is the belief that adults are not interchangeable. Children select adults with whom they wish to develop a special relationship. Adults also have preferences for working with certain types of children. Not all teachers can be all things to all children. Part of building meaningful relationships is acknowledging

COMPONENTS OF QUALITY CHILD CARE

- **Care must be familiar, predictable, and personalized.**
- **Relationships must be nourished, respected, and sustained.**
- **Young children must be made to feel safe, valued, and competent.**

"We get so busy during the day that sometimes I need to remind myself, that less rice on the shamrocks (preparing materials) and more time with the kids is really what my work is about."

Marredda Adkins
Children's Center Aide

"I have become more understanding of the children in this environment. I'm a better listener."

Mary Ramirez
Children's Center Aide

"I remember feeling kind of negative about it at first…When we actually paired up the buddy and the child and I saw the benefits and how well the child did, I was convinced that it was a good system."

Alyce Rogers
Children's Center Teacher

FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR INCLUDE:

- **the child's general health, temperament, and developmental competency**
- **the quality of parent-child relationship**
- **the level of stress and support experienced by the family and the community in which the child is a member**

limitations and strengths, and the qualities of a good match. Healthy matches between particular children and particular adults need to be allowed to occur. The authentic relationship that develops out of a match provides the emotional support for the child to explore, discover, and learn. It provides the child with the emotional climate that allows trust to form. The relationship can be a healing experience for those children who did not learn to trust, or for those who experienced disrupted trust in the infant/toddler years.

Growing trust enables the child to ask for and use the adult's support for comfort, solace, problem solving, and guidance. The relationship provides the teacher with the information needed to create a balance in responding to the child's need for support and need for autonomy.

Adults need permission to realize that they may be "a better match" with one child over another. Therefore, staff problem solving about a child's coping difficulty must include the differentiation of roles among the staff members, e.g., one staff member may be designated as the primary person to deal with a particular child with coping difficulties. This may require the support of staff and a change of responsibilities.

ALL BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION

Another underlying premise of this approach is the recognition that all behavior is communication and as such is the language of the child. Behavior that is often judged to be misbehavior may be the child's way of expressing feelings and needs, or it may be the child's way of coping with adult expectations.

FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

Factors that may influence a child's behavior include the child's general health, temperament, developmental competency, parent-child relationship, and the level of stress and support experienced by the family and the community in which the child is a member.

It is important to look at the details of behavior that are often overlooked in the bustle of everyday activities. When seemingly small things go wrong in a young child's life, adults may too quickly reassure the child that everything is okay and encourage the child to return to play activities. ("Don't worry about the spilled milk. Your shirt will dry. There's no need to cry. Here, have some more.") However, from the child's perspective, it may be more helpful to pause when the child shows distress and reflect upon what has happened. ("Oh dear! You were trying to drink your milk and it spilled all over your shirt. What should we do? Should I help you wash it off? Would you like me to write a note to your mommy and tell her what happened? Maybe we could ask her to bring some extra shirts so we always have something else to put on when there is an accident.")

THE TASKS OF TEACHERS ARE:

- to recognize and understand what the child is trying to communicate
- to modify adult expectations and environmental conditions that are not developmentally appropriate
- to assist the child in learning more adaptive ways to express oneself and cope with developmentally appropriate child care expectations and demands.

The art of teaching depends on the teacher being able to respond to child-generated needs/ideas. The skilled teacher operates in a child-responsive curricular format in terms of a child's cognitive, social, and emotional needs and capacities. The child's feelings and ideas are likely to be respected to the extent that the Center operates on the philosophy of mutual respect and to the extent to which staff-generated feelings and ideas are also given full consideration.

A child-centered, relationship-based philosophy allows teachers to address the needs of children within the context of the children's individual, biological, developmental, and

THE TASKS OF TEACHERS ARE:

- **to recognize and understand what the child is trying to communicate**
- **to modify adult expectations and environmental conditions that are not developmentally appropriate**
- **to assist the child in learning more adaptive ways to express oneself and cope with developmentally appropriate child care expectations and demands**

"Behavior, per se, is not the target. The goal is to see the child not as an object to be changed, but as a potential author of her own change. This is an important difference."

Carol Cole
Project Leader

"I want to know why children behave the way they do. The collaboration with special education has helped me gain insights about the needs of individual children; it has helped to validate what we need to offer children to establish trust and increase successful adjustment to school."

Cheryl Iglesias
Children's Center Teacher

Kirsten

family realities. A relationship-based problem solving process offers insight into the needs of children and guidance on helping children who are having difficulty coping with classroom expectations.

When the instructional program for young children is based on a child-centered curriculum, staff provides activities and experiences that reflect the diverse cultures of the community. Children are encouraged to express self-reliance, make choices, initiate their own activities, and solve problems. This philosophy is based on the belief that children move through stages of development based on their knowledge and experiences. Children's cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional learning occurs through their interactions with adults and peers, and through the use of concrete materials. Children develop positive self-concepts through meaningful relationships and through self mastery of the tasks of daily living that are appropriate for their developmental age. It is understood that children must have places, things, ideas, and feelings that are recognized as their own.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPERIENCES

The importance of communication between parents and staff around the health, development, and experiences of young children cannot be overstated. "Shared child-rearing" requires a close relationship between the significant caregivers and as such must operate on the philosophy of mutual respect in which parents' feelings and ideas are given full consideration. When a young child spends up to 12-hours away from parents, time needs to be allotted for parents and staff to exchange important information. Building rapport with teachers reduces parent anxiety. Child care staff can help build rapport by taking time to speak to each parent as the child is dropped off or picked up, by reporting/discussing positive characteristics about the child before expressing concerns, and by placing all comments about the child in the context of child development. ("It can be difficult for a child to adjust to a new situation; together we can help her work it out.")

Some child care providers may not understand child rearing practices when their cultural values are different than those of the families they serve or different from their child care colleagues. This can have an impact on the understanding of behavior in young children, leading to parent or staff conflict. How to communicate with parents/colleagues of diverse cultures regarding child-sensitive issues is an area that needs both training and support.

Emeritha

"I would not hesitate to enroll another child with special needs. Some staff members cannot handle a child's conduct. This staff provides nurturing adaptations, discusses issues, solves problems and meets child needs. I don't have to look at failures. That's nice."

Ruth Bergevon
Children's Center Principal

TELLTALE SIGNS OF STRESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

(Honig, 1986)

- Doesn't respond to friendly caregiver overtures
- Daydreams frequently
- Has grave, solemn face; rarely smiles or laughs
- Has frequent prolonged temper tantrums
- Cries a great deal for months after entry into group care
- Acts sullen and defiant
- Punishes self through slapping, head banging or calling self bad names
- Is overly sensitive to mild criticism
- Flinches if teacher or visiting adult approaches with caressing or reassuring gesture of out-stretched arm
- Reports proudly to teacher that he or she has hurt another child
- Is highly vigilant about others' misdeeds, tattles or jeers
- Is highly demanding of adults, although usually fairly self sufficient
- Bullies or scapegoats and may get other children to join in
- Carries out repetitive, stereotyped play that may have destructive aspects
- Clings to, shadows caregiver, although in group for months
- Is unable to carry out sustained play with preschool peers
- Has constant need to sleep, although physically well
- Is preoccupied with frightening images of monsters or other violent, threatening figures
- Has dull, vacant expression as if trying to ward off thinking about stressful trauma or tries to deny stressful feelings
- Is hyperactive or restless, wanders around room, touches and disturbs toys and games, cannot settle into constructive play
- Displays disturbed bodily functions, has trouble with feeding, constipation, or diarrhea, soils self frequently months after toilet training is completed
- Has trembling of hands or facial twitches, although apparently well
- Talks compulsively about physical dangers
- Grinds teeth during nap time
- Has rigid facial expression from taut muscles
- Displays loss of perceptual acuity
- Displays reduced attention capacity; even though caregiver is very clear in communicating, the child cannot focus well on activity or request
- Stimulates self constantly (by prolonged thumb sucking, masturbation, rocking body back and forth, or other such behaviors), which children normally do occasionally for self comfort
- "Feels jittery"

Reprinted from: Reducing Stress in Young Children's Lives. Edited by J. B. McCracken

Young children who are anxious, delayed, or disabled may be easily overwhelmed in a group setting and display signs of stress that require special attention and prove challenging to the child care center staff.

Teachers of young children are confronted by the growing number who exhibit unpredictable, baffling behavior. Many of these children are emotionally needy, vulnerable, and fragile. While staff can feel empathy for a child who has experienced disruptions and deprivation, children do behave and misbehave for a reason. The challenge remains how to move from the insight of the child's reality and life experiences to facilitating individual development within a group context. As seen in the following illustration, the goal is never to just manage the behavior, but rather to promote an authentic attachment.

ILLUSTRATION 3: ENHANCING CLASSROOM SUCCESS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

Carol, a resource teacher from the central office, has been meeting with the staff regularly to discuss concerns regarding children with challenging behavior and to support staff in developing strategies to successfully include vulnerable children with developmental delays and challenging behavior. Natalie was the seventh child that the Center staff had discussed.

Using the "Going Around the Circle" framework, staff easily related their concerns about Natalie, a three-year-old who had recently been enrolled in the Center.

Carol: What's the concern? What do you think Natalie's behavior is telling us? Remember what we have talked about in the past? Behavior is communication.

Robert: When Natalie started here she was so small. She had these big dark circles under her eyes.

QUALITY ATTACHMENT

Quality attachment provides the child with a sense of safety from which she can:

- **develop a sense of self**
- **explore her environment**
- **learn to modulate behavior**
- **practice emerging autonomy**
- **learn to play with other children**
- **become a symbolic thinker**

Tina: She was so unhappy. Sometimes she seemed like no one was caring for her. Remember her hair? If I tried to comb it she would explode…screaming, throwing herself on the floor.

Susan: Even now if you don't do everything just the way she wants, look out.

Mary: I'm not sure she should be in our school. She can't share at all. I don't know what to do with her. She belongs to special education.

Veronica: She seemed so scared. She would scream if anyone tried to get near her. She did not want to be touched.

Carol: Why is this happening? Small, dark circles under her eyes, somewhat unkempt, screaming. What do we know about her history? Her experiences? How she copes with the child care setting?

Susan: Natalie is an only child. Her father told us that Natalie's mother has been hospitalized for emotional problems. He said it is very difficult for him to take care of his wife, and Natalie, and keep his job.

Rose: Remember when Sally said she had a friend who lives near the family? They have seen Natalie roaming alone in the big back yard. So, for many reasons, it's critical that Natalie be in an all-day program.

Robert: Sally told me that her mother just came home after five months in the hospital.

Susan: Home for a while and then hospitalized for varying periods of time. This has been the pattern since Natalie was born.

Cathi: It's very hard to assess Natalie. She is very withdrawn. She engages in solitary play with very little apparent pleasure and she is basically nonverbal with some evidence of echolalia. Is there retardation? Is her behavior the result of environmental deprivation? We just can't know yet.

Alice: I'm not sure it's fair to the other kids ... all that screaming and her temper tantrums. We don't have time to give her a lot of attention.

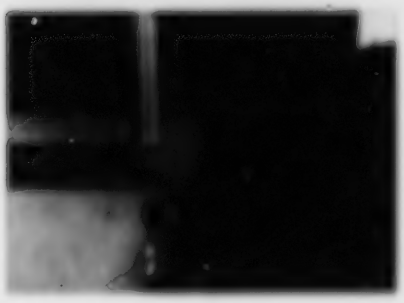
Carol: Natalie presents a particular challenge because of the confusing picture of severe language delay, possible developmental delays, and overlaying emotional problems. I think we can all agree that Natalie has had some difficult experiences in her early life. How does she let you know what she wants or needs?

Robert: She has a hard time with transitions. She doesn't like when things change.

Irma: She seems most comfortable when she is able to play alone.

Carol: How can we help?

Tina: I really don't know what to do with her. I guess she makes me feel pretty incompetent.



Making time to meet, and "Going Around the Circle" gave staff the opportunity to focus on Natalie. They discussed what adaptations would be necessary to implement her Individual Education Program goals. During this time they talked about her behavior, shared their opinions, and acknowledged the frustration of working with such challenging behavior in the Center. Engaging in the relationship-based problem solving process of inquiry and reflection are important elements in the process of developing strategies that can best serve Natalie's special needs in this setting.

Susan: *Does she need a special friend here at school?*

Carol: *You mean like we had for Juliette?*

Tess: *It worked for Juliette.*

Cathy: *Does she trust anyone here? We will be better able to assess her skills if there is someone here she can trust.*

Rose: *Natalie could benefit from the support of a predictable adult who could help her make sense of what is expected in the Center.*

After further discussion the staff decided that Natalie could benefit from the security of a special attachment figure who would serve as an ally, a safe harbor for her. Then, the concern became how to select the "Special Buddy." Again using the "Going Around the Circle" framework:

Carol: *Who among the staff does the child like? Or, asked another way, who among the staff likes Natalie?*

Mary: *She likes Rodney.*

Tina: She speak none with Irma.

Abby: Is it important that the "Special Buddy" speak Spanish?

Irma: It's kind of funny. I don't speak Spanish, but she does like me to be with me.

Rodney: She has had a hard time. I think she needs someone to understand that she is not "bad."

Irma: When Rodney is here, she seems to prefer him.

Carla: Do you think that is because she has spent more time with her father than her mother?

Mary: Maybe she feels safer with a male teacher.

Tina: Rodney speaks Spanish.

Irma: But I see the father at the end of the day. He seems to want me to tell him about Natalia. Natalia likes to sing and dance with me.

Carol: Irma, you have a good working relationship with the father, and it sounds like you are being successful at getting Natalia to participate in some activities, but I'm wondering if there is a particular person she seems to seek out or prefer when she is distressed?

Others: That's Rodney.

Carol: How do you feel about that, Rodney?

Rodney: Fine. I'd like that. Maybe it is because she has been cared for more by her father. The other day she came to my table and seemed to make a little more eye contact with me.

Carol — So what's the plan? If Richard is the special buddy, how will that work and what else needs to happen to support the plan? Spelling out an agreed plan of action will help ensure Natasha's successful inclusion.

Richard — Well, she should sit at my table.

Rose — Having controls since the start would support where she tries to get into the play with other kids.

Mary — It would be helpful to know what it is Sonny's found since we could bring her to you, Richard.

Mum — Kids need to learn from all they achieve. What if Richard is sick or something?

Carol — We need to think about bringing Natasha to Richard for support, not punishment.

Steve — You are all responsible for all the children. And if this time Richard kind of has the extra responsibility of making a special connection with Natasha, then we need to support him.

Mary — What if all the kids want that kind of attention? Isn't all of this attention spoiling Natasha?

Tess — I think most of the kids we see have playing R1 cartoon lives' some kids like you better than others. It's helpful for me to talk about how some kids are harder for me and other ones.

Steve — I will talk to Sue Gallen about what we have discussed. She is very concerned and I think he will appreciate the special care we are giving his daughter.

Carol: Let's suppose that Natalie does become attached to Robert. What about Mary's concerns? What will happen if Robert is divorced?

Tom: She will have a bad day.

Cathy: Probably, but it will go better if you prepare her.

Mary: What do you mean?

Cathy: If you know ahead of time, you can help her to anticipate Robert's absence. You might consider telling her when he is, and how long he will be gone, and what she can count to if she needs help. The day he is absent, depending on the care she is getting, you might want to acknowledge her feelings (the s/he guess that she might be missing Robert) and as it was found out of like "Talking to the Air."

Mary: You mean like saying to Tom, "Tom, I wonder if Natalie is missing Robert since he is not here today."

Cathy: Exactly. You can't just dismiss her feelings and assume that just because you are all good to achieve Natalie likes you and will accept comfort from you all equally.

Tom: Well, I guess you could dismiss the feelings, but I expect Natalie's negative behavior will escalate.

Carol: This is a great discussion. This is a case where "Talking to the Air" gave words to what the child was by feeling. By giving the question, "I wonder if ..." rather

than saying, "You must be..." you leave room for negotiation and in a way invite the child to be part of the conversation. This in turn helps to build trust; which in turn serves to organize emotions and behavior for the child. And, hopefully, because the question is quietly broadcast, and said out loud "In the Air," it provides an explanation for Natalie's behavior to the other children as well. But first, we need to...

Robert: Whew, I need never to be absent!

Carol: Well not really, Robert. Natalie has experienced a lot of absences without explanation. Maybe we can all work together to give her another kind of experience. We'll see if Natalie can learn to cope better when her feelings are acknowledged and supported.

"I like the 'Talking in the Air.' You know, just saying things out loud to the children and staff. It helps staff find a way to communicate, to say what is observable, without judgment in a clear open and direct way. It's a good way to share information and become aware of what's going on."

Erma Soloman
Children's Center Teacher

Veronica: Robert, I could spend a little extra time every morning with Natalie before you get here.

Cathi: That would be great, Veronica, if you could kind of do the same thing each morning with her. Make your greetings very predictable. She needs experiences she can count on being the same day after day.

Alyce: I think the other children are a little afraid of Natalie. I'll explain to them that with our help, Natalie will learn the rules.

Robert: I'll check in on her frequently throughout the day and remind her that I'm here to help her.

Susan: It will be very important, Robert, and any of

you others, to keep talking about Natalie and share with each other what works and what doesn't work when helping her.

Carol: Okay so, the plan is:

- share our plan with her father
- engage other kids in a dialogue about what they think of Natalie's behavior and how they might help her have a better time at the Center
- have Veronica greet her and make sure she spends a little time with her each morning until Robert arrives
- bring Natalie to Robert for comfort, not punishment
- have Robert check in with her frequently
- share the "Talking in the Air" strategies with other children and staff
- inform others of the best practices for working with Natalie

SOME WEEKS LATER AT ANOTHER STAFF MEETING

Carol: How is it going with Natalie?

Robert: She doesn't look so sad. She smiles more.

Roz: She is developing a consistent personality. She seems to take pride in her accomplishments. She loves to sing and dance.

Susan: Her father is very pleased with her progress. He says she sings little songs at home now.

Irma: She has friends. It is slow in coming, but she can play so much better than before.

Cathi:	There is real progress in her language and social competence.
Carol:	What do you think made the difference?
Mary:	I think special time with Robert really helped.
Carol:	How?
Susan:	She needed a special friend she could trust and Robert became that.
Robert:	I think it was being patient, talking to her, gaining her trust, and letting her know I didn't think she was bad. You know that technique of "Talking in the Air" is hard, but it makes sense to assume that as adults talk, children listen, so the kids need to be included in discussions.
Susan:	How did that help Natalie?
Robert:	Well, she seems to listen to me more and more because I think she knows now I will explain things to her, help her know what will happen next. "Talking in the Air" seems to help with transitions. Her behavior is better.
Veronica:	She still has trouble sharing, but she doesn't explode like she used to.
Robert:	I think the other kids feel a kind of relief when I talk about Natalie's behavior. I mean we are all there and know what's happening; we are all experiencing it. It is real.

Roz: So putting this real experience on the table or "Talking in the Air" about Natalie's behavior acknowledges the shared experience, rather than ignoring the "elephant in the room."

Tina: Yes, and then somehow just giving it words makes things more manageable, a problem to be solved. The other kids help too. The other day Marco said, "I'll be glad when Natalie learns the rules; she is too loud."

Carol: So the "Talking in the Air" is a way of communicating that connects the classroom; it says that here, in this place, things can be safely discussed. "Talking in the Air" can be used to reframe and restate events, pass on information, and solve problems because it reflects, without judgment, on things that have happened.

Cathi: Her speech is so much more understandable. Using the same simple words over and over to explain events and expectations has probably helped her organize her language as well.

Tina: She just looks so much better. It's easier for everyone.

Robert: She trusts us now, more and more all the time.

THE PROBLEM

The staff was concerned about a child in their care who couldn't seem to cope with the demands and expectations of the Center. Natalie, a small three-year-old child, seemed overwhelmed and fearful. She was a child with speech delays who would isolate herself from the group and who would frequently explode, screaming and throwing herself on the floor. The staff was at a loss as to how to help this child. They were frustrated and becoming irritated because of the negative impact that Natalie was having on the rest of the children and the Center as a whole. Some staff members were wondering if Natalie should go to another educational setting.

THE PROCESS

Carol started the meeting by using the "Going Around the Circle" framework as a means to help focus staff on ideas about Natalie's behavior. This provided a structured format to reflect on aspects of Natalie's behavior that left them feeling frustrated and incompetent.

They discussed using the previously developed "Special Buddy" system and considered whether Natalie would be successful if they tried this strategy with her. All staff members' interactions with Natalie were valued. Of the staff who volunteered, a decision had to be made regarding who would best fit Natalie's needs. Carol guided staff by:

- encouraging each staff member to offer their view of the behavior
- eliciting recollections of previous experiences with the "Special Buddy" system
- reviewing the use of "Talking in the Air" strategies

Known

"GOING AROUND THE CIRCLE"

"Going Around the Circle" addresses five principles that support inquiry, respect, and reflection. Let's look more closely at Illustration 2 and examine examples of the questions and responses in this relationship-based problem solving framework.

1. **Identifying staff-generated issues for problem solving.**
   Facilitator asked:
   What's the concern? What's new?
   What shall we talk about today?
   Staff responded:
   ...we need to talk about Natalie
   ...she is so unhappy
   ...dark circles under her eyes
   ...seems no one is caring for her
   ...like a time bomb, explodes, throws herself on the floor screaming
   ...can't share at all, plays alone, very withdrawn
   ...screams if anyone goes near her, doesn't want to be touched
   ...can't deal with transitions
   ...hard to assess
   ...no time to give her lots of attention
   ...not fair to other kids
   ...difficulty communicating simple wants
   ...maybe she shouldn't be in the Center

2. **Gathering information from all concerned so that the problem is stated from all points of view.**
   Facilitator asked:
   Why do you think it is happening? What do we know about her history, her home life, her developmental competency?
   Staff responded:
   ...only child
   ...now in a large Center with lots of noise
   ...echolalia, basically non-verbal
   ...mother was hospitalized with emotional problems on and off since birth; the last time was for five months
   ...father having difficult time caring for Natalie, her mother, and keeping a job
   ...may have learning disability, may be mentally retarded
   ...lack of language interferes with peer relationships
   ...cannot cope with Center demands
   ...she seems to have no one to trust

5. **Recognizing all behavior is communication by asking participants to explore the interactions and relationships of the staff, families, and children involved.**
   Facilitator asked:
   What do you think the behavior is communicating?
   Staff responded:
   - doesn't trust
   - seems more comfortable with men than women
   - easily frustrated
   - not used to consistent structure
   - doesn't have words to communicate needs

6. **Discussing possible solutions and barriers in order to reach consensus about a potential course of action.**
   Facilitator asked:
   How can we help? What's the plan? Who will do what? Does she need a "Special Buddy?" Whom does she like? Whom does she go to for help or comfort? Who likes Natalie?
   Staff responded:
   - Robert is the "Special Buddy"
   - Robert will check in with her frequently
   - Natalie will sit at Robert's table
   - The staff will call Robert when Natalie is having a difficult time
   - Susan will discuss the plans with Natalie's father
   - The other children will be engaged in a dialogue about what they might think of Natalie's behavior and how they might help her
   - Veronica can spend extra time with Natalie until Robert arrives in the morning

   And in subsequent meetings:

7. **Reviewing the process, evaluating and modifying the plans as necessary.**

Facilitator asked:

How's it going?

Staff responded:

- she doesn't look so sad, she smiles more
- she is developing a consistent personality
- she seems to take pride in her accomplishments
- she loves to sing and dance
- her father is very pleased with her progress
- she has friends, she can play so much better than before
- it really helped having Robert as her special friend
- Robert was patient, talking to her, gaining her trust
- her behavior is better
- she still has trouble sharing, but she doesn't explode like she used to
- her speech is so much more understandable

WHAT MAKES IT WORK?

The staff looked at Natalie's behavior in the context of her development, temperament, and family experiences. Natalie is a little girl who was vulnerable because of her language delay, sensitivity to changes and noise, and long unpredictable separations from her mother. She withdrew from teachers and peers, didn't relate to other people, and preferred to play alone. She couldn't express her feelings in adaptive ways. Frequent tantrums and screaming demonstrated how overwhelmed she was in the child care situation. Two strategies proved effective in meeting Natalie's needs: "Special Buddy" and "Talking in the Air."

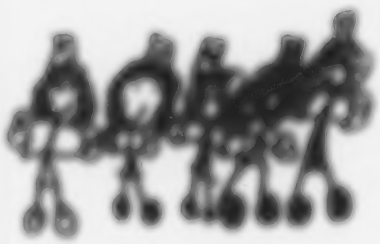
"SPECIAL BUDDY"

The "Special Buddy" provided her with a consistent adult who would be available to meet her social and emotional needs. Robert served as an ally to the child. This helped alleviate her stress and helped to enhance her coping skills. Robert reported that as a "Special Buddy," he is very patient, looks for clues, gives the child choices, is warm and caring and nurturing. By paying particular attention and being consistently responsive, the "Special Buddy" can support exploration, anticipate challenges, and negotiate

problem solving so that the child will learn the consequences of actions. Through a consistent predictable relationship that develops over time, trust begins to emerge.

"Giving children information and preparing them for change, whether it's a new enrollment, birth of a sibling, a change in teachers or group structure, or a schedule change, helps children organize their emotions and develop appropriate responses. Acknowledging that change is significant and requires preparation is a key to helping children be more successful."

Claire Colarusso
Children's Center Principal



Children Moving

"TALKING ON THE AIR"

The staff used "Talking on the Air" as a means of reframing Natalie's behavior. It was used to openly restate events, pass on information, and solve problems. The classroom, then, became a safe place to talk about fearful and anxiety-provoking issues and feelings. It also became a place to listen to others and learn about different perspectives and concerns. When information was shared in an empathic way, children, as well as adults, began to understand that behavior happens for a reason.

For instance, when the teacher sympathetically advised the class that Natalie's mother was in the hospital again and "wondered" out loud if Natalie was worried, some children extended a new sensitivity to Natalie. With this additional information, the staff also had a better understanding of Natalie's challenging behavior. They could personalize intervention strategies to help her be more successful in the classroom. "Talking on the Air" acknowledged Natalie's experience and facilitated a further understanding of her behavior among staff and children. This understanding, in turn, supported Natalie's growing skills in developing adaptive behavior.

By "Talking on the Air," Robert gave words to Natalie's actions. For example, when Natalie had trouble sharing materials with other children, Robert might have said, "Natalie, you were playing with the puzzle. Marco came to the table. He wanted to play with the other puzzle. You grabbed it from him. I think you are having a hard time; you want all the toys. Here, I will help you."

And to the other children, Robert might say, "Remember when you were new and had to learn the rules? Natalie will learn the rules and learn new words to tell us what she wants."

"Talking on the Air" is a way of reflecting on what is happening without judgement. The teacher's narration reframes the events to provide a buffer of support that bridges the child's actions and growing self-mastery.

KEY QUESTIONS FOR INCREASING PERSONALIZED STAFF-TO-CHILD INTERACTIONS

(Project Relationship Staff, 1993)

Project Relationship Staff have identified the following key questions for increasing personalized staff-to-child interactions.

Temperament

- *How does the child deal with routine transitions? How long did it take him to develop a pattern?*
- *How does the child deal with novel situations? On what factors does this depend?*
- *How does the child go about getting needs and wants met?*
- *How does the child react to success?*
- *How does the child soothe himself?*
- *When does the child have the best time? What does she like best?*
- *How does the child learn?*

Development

- *What are the child's developmental strengths and vulnerabilities?*
- *How might they be influencing the child's behavior?*

Experience

- *Where has the child lived and with whom since birth, i.e. what does her relationship time line with the primary caregiver look like?*
- *How has the child reacted to separations from or changes in caregivers?*
- *Does the child have brothers and sisters to whom he is attached? Who?*
- *Have there been critical factors in her caregiving environment that have reduced responsiveness?*
- *How many transitions per day is the child making? How is she supported in these?*

In this place

- *Who among the staff does the child like?*
- *Who among the staff likes the child?*
- *How does the child react to failure?*
- *What friendships has the child formed? How?*

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING SUPPORTIVE ROUTINES AND RITUALS TO ENRICH PROGRAM PRACTICES FOR CHILDREN, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

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DEVELOPING SUPPORTIVE ROUTINES AND RITUALS TO ENRICH PROGRAM PRACTICES FOR CHILDREN, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

Changes in a young child's life can feel unsettling and frightening if the child does not know what to expect. The rhythm of daily classroom routines provides children with the markers of the day's events. Routines give the classroom predictability which supports the child's capacity to cope with classroom expectations. They lay the foundation for a sense of order. When children experience events that are predictable, they do not need to second guess what is going to happen. They feel secure and protected.

OBSERVATIONS OF ROUTINES

Routines are of particular importance for children who are highly reactive and hypersensitive to the world around them. Changes such as coming to a differently organized table, having a substitute teacher going on a field trip or going to a special event in the auditorium can be very stressful for these children. Routines provide a bridge between the child's inner experiences and classroom demands. Routines build in expectations for children for whom changes and transitions are difficult. Teachers can provide added support when they are working with sensitive children.

There are certain routines that can provide opportunities for the development of personal relationships between teachers and children. This occurs when the morning greetings, snack time, nap time, and field trips are individualized for each youngster and accompanied by warm touch (or contact) and personalized conversation.

Routines become rituals when they are used to organize feelings, thoughts, and values. Through predictable ways of dealing with parents and disturbing

Try to facilitate a discussion about operations with staff that focuses on
- what's the experience for the child?
- what's the experience for the parent?
- what's the experience for the staff?

Does there an ever exist a plan?

DIFFICULTIES WITH SEPARATION

Early childhood workers can help the child who is having difficulty separating by:

- acknowledging the child's feelings
- allowing the child to bring items from home (e.g. blanket, stuffed animal, favorite toys) given at the family's discretion
- previewing with the child how the day will be spent
- helping the child engage in a play activity
- reminding the child that someone or family will return at a certain time (e.g. after snack time)

"Children and adults develop their own ways of saying and acting through routines and rituals. It is through routines that children are learning that they can trust the world and know that it will follow its usual ways of development will be."

Rebecca Parlakian
Zero to Three
Before Words Begin

TEACHER-PARENT PARTNERSHIP

It is vital that the receiving teacher in the morning be consistent, open, and warm in order to develop relationships with the individual parents. Rapport between teacher and parent will lessen parental anxiety about leaving their child in another's care. Teachers can reassure parents about the positive aspects of the child care experience. Teacher-parent partnerships provide the opportunity for parents to share their child's fears, strengths, and vulnerabilities, and to share family events or situations that may affect the way the child is able to cope with Center expectations. Teachers may need to meet with parents to discuss the importance of the parent-teacher partnerships.

ROUTINES AS RITUALS

Snack time and lunch time are excellent opportunities to build in interactions between teacher and child and among the children. Teachers should participate with the children during snack and lunch time. The socialization process is an important aspect of mealtime. It is a time to share the everyday events that are a part of all children's lives. It is a time to acknowledge the feelings that accompany these everyday events, and to discuss similarities and differences among children regarding their preferences, thoughts, and ways of dealing with their world.

Mealtime also provides the unhurried time needed by many children to share critical issues that have arisen in their home lives, such as family illness, hardship, separations and losses. The conversations that develop give the opportunity for the teacher to validate the child's experience and feelings.

Nap time can be trying for teachers and children alike. Children differ in their need for mid-day sleep, in their styles for calming down in order to sleep, and in their need for assistance in establishing a resting or sleeping pattern. Napping routines also need to be individualized.

Departures are equally important. It is an opportunity for the parent to find out about positive and negative experiences that occurred during the day that may affect the child's behavior at home and influence the desire to return

WAYS TO HELP A CHILD AT NAP TIME

- Talk to parent about home rituals
- Read a book
- Rock to calm down
- Rub child's back
- Sing a song
- Play soft music
- Give the child a book
- Let the child use a special blanket
- Give the child a stuffed animal or a favorite toy

to child care on the following day. The teacher assigned to departure time may not have spent the entire day with the child. There needs to be a mechanism for the exchange of information among the teachers so that they may better understand the child, and the receiving parent may obtain significant information about the child's day. The departure teacher must also be a consistent person. The daily contact will be brief, but relationships with parents will develop over time if interchanges are meaningful to the parent.

The departure ritual for the child is also important and should be as personalized as the morning greeting ritual. Reviewing plans with the child for the following day is a positive way to build and maintain relationship bonds.

HOW HAS YOUR CENTER PLANNED PERSONALIZED WAYS TO RELATE TO CHILDREN CONCERNING:

- *the first day of school*
- *morning greetings*
- *sharing time*
- *snack time*
- *transitions of activities*
- *lunch time*
- *nap time*
- *national and religious holidays*
- *special birthdays and anniversaries*
- *family special events*
- *dealing with illness and death*
- *dealing with separation and loss*
- *departure/good-byes*
- *the last day of school*

ILLUSTRATION 3: ENRICHING PROGRAM PRACTICES FOR CHILDREN, STAFF, AND FAMILIES

As spring approached, the staff began discussions about the upcoming culmination activity. They were eager to avoid what had happened the previous year. Several parents had been very upset and one mother left in tears. The Children's Center Principal engaged staff in the "Going Around the Circle" to discuss ways to improve this year's culmination.

Susan: I want to discuss the culmination activity coming up and see what we can do to make the activity more successful than last year.

Mary: Some of the parents expect a culmination ceremony. Parents like to see their children all dressed up.

Alyce: But in some ways it seems like the day is geared more for the parents than the children.

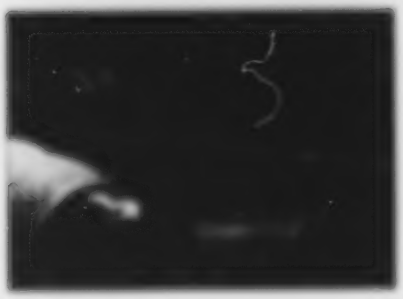
Andy: It's not very child-centered really. And it changes every year!

Carla: It seems like such a lot of work for the staff.

Virginia: Some of the parents can't afford the outfits.

Tina: I remember the year culmination was set up so that some of us didn't even get to say good-bye to the kids we had worked with. The kids got very fussy if they had to wait too long.

Esther: You are right, Tina. Some of the kids didn't get to say good-bye to their friends. And some of the parents couldn't get off work.



Susan: I think we are all in agreement that culmination isn't working so well. I wonder how we can make it better?

Alyce: Should each room have its own graduation? That would be a little less hectic.

Virginia: It might make it a little less hectic for staff, but it doesn't address the concerns of the parents.

Carla: We need to keep in mind the parents, kids, and staff. The plan needs to work for everyone.

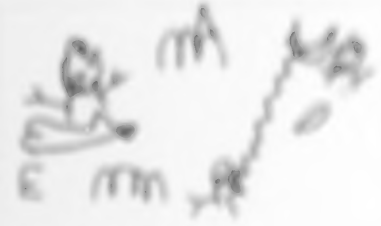
Mary: Maybe only the kids that are leaving the Center should be involved... have something special and then the rest of the kids can do something else that day.

Tina: But that really doesn't let friends say good-bye to each other.

Alyce: There there really wouldn't be any kind of transition that was shared, no closure or party. I think parents would want a ceremony of some kind.

Andy: We need to talk to the parents.

Susan: I think you are all raising some very good points. We need to consider our community. We need to think about the needs of the children, families, and staff. A negative of having the ceremony at one time is that many of our parents cannot get off from work. If the whole school participates, the kids get very restless. I think we all remember children who simply were not having a good time, and then neither were staff or parents. Somewhere we have to balance parent needs, child needs, and staff needs. The common thread here is the need for closure, something that acknowledges there is a change. This is a transition. It should be an event that recognizes that each child had personal, significant, real-life experiences while they were in this place. I mean, how many of you can remember an experience you had when you were four or five years old? How many of your memories are from school experiences?



Ryan

Tina: Who cares?

Mary: I hated the Halloween!

Virginia: In first grade my teacher left off a word and was gone for six weeks.

Susan: See, we all have memories. Our culminating activity should help the kids prepare for leaving us and help them anticipate going to

the "big school." The family also wants/needs to formally acknowledge the change. A certain stage or part of their child's education is coming to an end. Having a meaningful ritual for this transition can alert the parents to the notion that these transitions are important and need to be thought about in developmentally appropriate ways that support the child.

Virginia: We need to support parents as they support their kids. Parents may need to be reminded that each child reacts to change differently.

Susan: Yes! And the culmination must also give all of you staff a sense of closure. This group of children is moving on. You've all worked hard. The work we've all done is well done.

Alyce: You are giving me a lot to think about. It would be nice if somehow the ceremony could go on all day for the parents' benefit.

Esther: And just be a little less formal.

Callie: I once saw a group of kids transition by crossing a bridge.

Susan: Talk a little more about that.

Callie: Well in this classroom they just turned the rocking boat upside down and made it a bridge and the kids crossed over it.

Tara: We could do that.

Sally: What about the parents?

Alisha

Anonymous

Susan: We could just leave the rocking boat bridge up all day. Then the parents could come and have their child cross over the bridge any time.

Mary: We could decorate the bridge.

Virginia: When would we have the party?

Alice: A lot of the kids will be leaving together at about 11:30.

Tina: We could serve cookies and ice cream about that time and then, later, as parents arrived, they could see their child cross the bridge and have ice cream and cookies with them.

Susan: I like this. If we set up the rocking boat as a kind of activity center then the younger kids could choose whether or not to participate.

Alice: We could blow a horn or ring some bells or something to notify everyone that someone was "Crossing the Bridge."

Susan: Good idea! Then children and staff that had a particular interest in the child could be sure to be around.

Celia: What will you do as the child crosses the bridge? It would be nice if we knew where the child was going so we could say, "Jose, is going to ..."

Rula: I have a couple of parents in my room that would probably be interested in helping with this. I'll ask them what they think of the idea.

Mary: We have to be sure and check this out with the rest of the staff too.

"Visually we have a way to say good bye to each other that works for everybody."

Eileen Rudd
Children's Center Teacher

Virginia: I think it will be fun to decorate the bridge.

Mary: This idea works much better for staff. I like it better than having just certain staff do something special with the graduates, while we have to stay with the other kids for the day.

Susan: We talk a lot about how the transition from home to child care can be difficult for any young child. We know how to support children and families there, but we spend less time thinking about the good byes.

Tara: I was thinking about the planning we did to help Natasha "transition" into the Center. Our planning really helped her to organize herself and be successful here. She has grown so much and is so comfortable here now. It will be real jarring to her and I bet to other kids as well to have the routine changed. It makes sense to spend time planning so that this celebration can be successful too. The good byes should be as special as the hellos.

At a subsequent meeting following celebration activities:

Polly: Several parents have mentioned to me how much they enjoyed the relaxed way we did the celebrations this year. Mrs. Lopez in particular told me how grateful she was to be able to come at her regular pick up time and still be able to participate in a special occasion for her son. Her employer simply would not have let her off work early.

Virginia: It was cute the way the littler kids kept crossing the bridge and kind of playing on it all day. Everything was more relaxed. Special, but not such a big deal.

Tracy: Wasn't it amazing to see Natalie cross that bridge!

Khaty: She has changed so much. You know, over a year we could decorate the bridge a little more and send invitations.

Alyce: The staff could walk, participate too and as good fun. It was nice, very meaningful to everyone.

Susan: I think it worked as well as it did because we all took time to look at what could be meaningful for children, staff, and families. Everyone played a role.

CONSIDERATIONS

- If you have the staff decided to have a "Crossing the Bridge" celebration again. They attended the ritual by decorating the bridge with arches and flowers. They brought a special lunch to mark an appeal when a child was ready to cross the bridge. One of the teachers made a drawing of the exciting boat carnival agenda, drawn to be used on the invitations. More parents attended than the previous year.

- Some time that year staff were discussing what they were going to do for a favorite staff member who was leaving to take another position. Esther commented that maybe she should "Cross the Bridge." Other staff members picked up on the idea. Both staff and families could be involved. It would be a concrete understandable way for the community to acknowledge the change she was/was Tina was leaving the Center.

- The school age team decided that they also wanted a "Crossing the Bridge" ceremony for both of their teams that were leaving. They called a class meeting and as a team, wrote "Beyond the Circle" to make plans. They

decided to give music and art AGE offered a bring a home love and vigor. They are familiar environments composed on the computer. They scheduled the ceremony for the afternoon and all of them would come the bridge at the same time. When parents arrived the children served them punch, cookies, and popcorn.

[illegible]

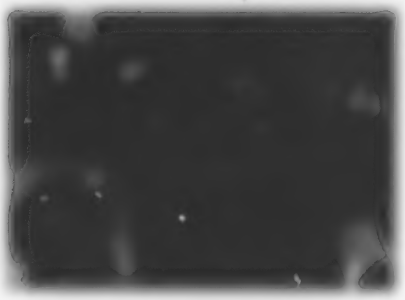
The Center had spent considerable time over the years addressing daily classroom rituals. However they had never as a group discussed the need for a predictable way of saying good-bye to teachers and children. No traditions had been established. Consequently, teachers and families were getting mixed messages about the last day of school and other departures leading to both dissatisfaction and distress.

[illegible]

Susan used the "Going Around the Circle" process to get all staff members involved in developing a culminating activity that would be meaningful to staff, parents, and children. In this way the feelings of all members of the Center community were given careful consideration. There was considerable effort given to balance parent need, child need, and staff need and to acknowledge that this is a time of significant transition for all concerned.

"GOING AROUND THE CIRCLE"

"Going Around the Circle" addresses the principles that support dignity, respect, and reflection. Let's look more closely at Illustration 1 and examine examples of the questions and responses in the relationship-based problem solving framework as we how the staff at this site developed program practices that supported the community of children, families, and staff.



"Celebrations become meaningful because they are developed through discussions that reflect our Center's philosophy and beliefs."

Susan Berkowitz
Children's Center Principal

1. **Identifying staff-generated issues for problem solving**
   Facilitator asked:
   What's the concern? What's next? What shall we talk about today?
   Staff responded:
   - Celebration is not working well
   - Celebration is different every year
   - Avoid the incident that upset parents the year before
   - How to balance parents, child and staff needs in celebration activity

2. **Gathering information from all concerned so that the problem is owned from all points of view**
   Facilitator asked:
   Why do you think it is happening? What's your viewpoint on why this is happening?
   Staff responded:
   - Some parents expect a celebration ceremony
   - parents like to see their child dressed up
   - the day seems more geared for parents than children
   - some parents cannot afford the fancy outfits
   - the day is a lot of work for staff
   - children learn at different times

3. **Recognizing all behavior is communication by asking participants to explore the interactions and relationships of the staff, families, and children involved**
   Facilitator asked:
   What do you think the behavior is communicating?
   Staff responded:
   - the need for change is a common thread for teachers, children, and parents
   - children go thru of process is not developmentally appropriate
   - the expectation of parents is significant, and the message from is should be acknowledged

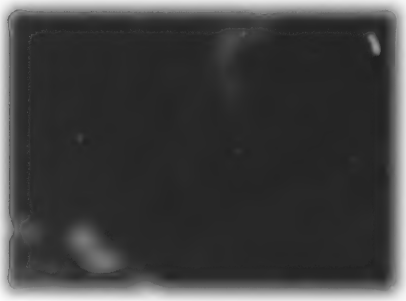
4. Discussing possible solutions and barriers in order to reach consensus about a potential course of action.

Facilitator asked:

How can we help? What do you? Who will do what?

Staff responded:

- Set the starting time for crossing the bridge
- Set up the walking time to be at points where everyone could be engaged in an all the parents could come throughout the day
- Send to all parents of the change in bonus
- Decorate the bridge



"Council is open to all Parents"
By Jim Francis
© Milton Keynes Mail

And in a subsequent meeting:

5. Reviewing the process, evaluating and modifying the plan as necessary.

Facilitator asked:

How is it going?

Staff responded:

- We forgot the parents could participate
- everything worked very smooth
- for us planning work, such discussion and evaluation
- for all could participate in using good fun to friends and the other children
- everyone played role

WHAT MAKES IT WORK?
REVEALING PERSPECTIVES, ISSUES AND TENSIONS

The approach used in the Jim Francis project was given a form to work. As more general considerations and issues raised in the case study. Please refer and self-test by it and look for the points you identify. More points identified in the subsequent one. The other children and the play build on a self-created three and presentation about the young people to each other. Eventually the staff played the need for acknowledging the importance of a balanced number. A simple matter that developed into a meaningful result and led to a young [illegible] number of the children's views considered.

[illegible]
GREETINGS AND DEPARTURES

[illegible]

[illegible]

- [illegible] greetings and good-byes as a rich child
- Develop observation skills
- Assist children with strength to determine when there are changes in children's behavior caused by play
- Protect confidentiality and keep each child's or a child's home
- Be aware that families have individual and cultural needs for greetings and departures
- Understand that departures or absences of adult and other children can have an impact on individual children
- Prepare children for arrival and departure of adult and the classroom
- Remember that the arrival of an adult and the classroom should not coincide as the child's space time in relation to adult
- Make specific plans with parents regarding greetings and departures
- Engage parents in critical sharing information regarding [illegible] times, activities and daily routines
- Encourage parents to share [illegible] and family issues so they will not be [illegible] in making the the greatest for the child
- Communicate the day's events at departure
- Design a consistent process to be involved in arrival and in departure to develop personalized relationships over time
- Communicate information about a child's day to a [illegible] routine

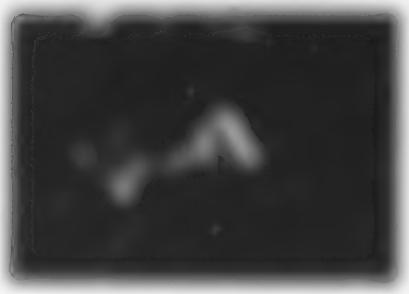
[illegible]

- What information should be shared at departure?
- Why should information be shared at departure?
- Under what conditions should information be shared?
- With whom [illegible] shared at arrival time?
- In each child personal [illegible]?
- Are the greeting and departure should personalized?

[illegible] TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN AT RISK

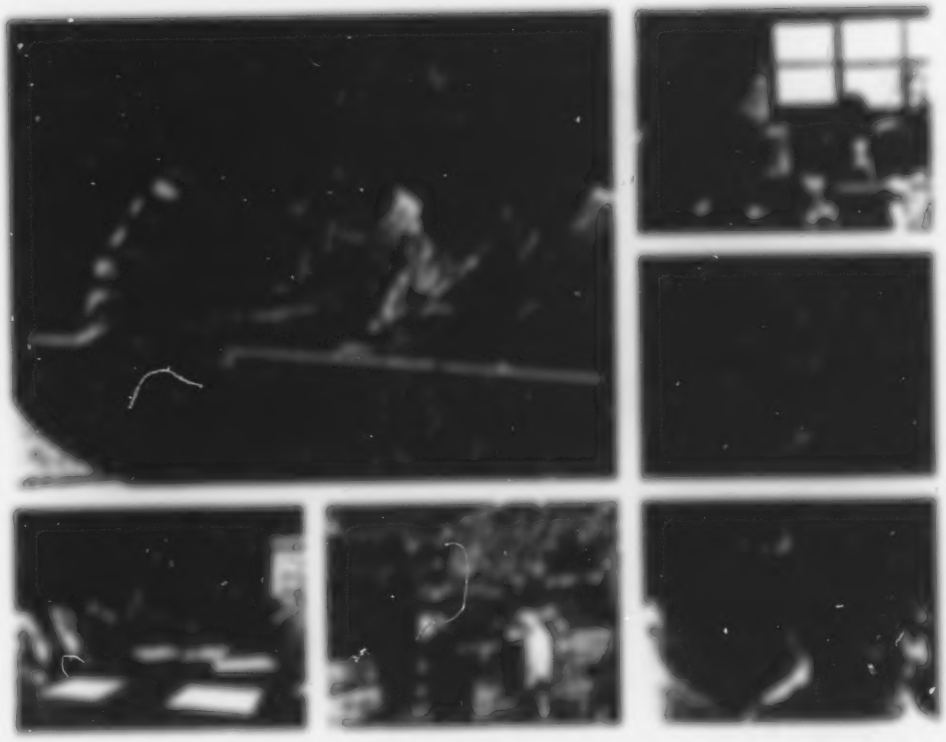
[illegible] Policy, 1998)

- Key attention to the development of accompanied adult–child relationships
- Acknowledge child's rights and accept feelings
- Provide an environment that protects the child from emotional and physical maltreatment
- Provide the child with opportunities to make choices in the child-dependent and protective environment
- Provide the child a specific experiences of regular love and boundaries
- Prepare and support the child for respect and mature changes in life stories
- Provide the parents or [illegible] your role children's lives as [illegible] e.g. [illegible] [illegible] conditions, and so on
- Provide the child [illegible] strategies to reduce risk and [illegible] e.g. [illegible] evening child, child and [illegible] protection)



[illegible] the treatment we will [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

APPENDIX



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APPENDIX

PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

Project Relationship is the result of a five year Handicapped Model Demonstration Project funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services and Early Education Program for Children with Disabilities and administered by the Los Angeles Unified School District. It was developed to enhance the collaboration of special education and child care teachers and to provide support and training to child care staff. The goal was to increase classroom success for young children with identified disabilities and risk factors who are having difficulty coping with child care expectations.

IN THIS PLACE: THE LOS ANGELES STORY

LOS ANGELES CHILDREN'S CENTER PROGRAMS

The Los Angeles Unified School District, Division of Child Development administers over 100 publicly funded Children's Centers that provide pre-school child care programs for approximately 8,000 young children, ages two to five. Each Children's Center is a unique community itself, made up of a blend of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity among the children, parents, and staff.

The inclusion of special education personnel into a Children's Center needed to be well thought out. The special education felt it was important to know the child care community and develop relationships with members of that community. All the special education teachers contacted the Center administrators to set up appointments to learn more about the program. Individual plans were made by each Center administrator and the special educator regarding the integration of a new staff member into the child care community.

Dory

Rashid

"I had been visiting a Center for several months when one of the teachers approached me in an agitated state. She told me about a child who had recently become a behavior problem in the classroom. Since this behavior was not typical, the teacher contacted the mother. The mother and the family had been the victim of a hold-up and the child had had a gun pointed at his head."

The teacher was distressed that the family hadn't communicated this important information to the school. In an effort to be helpful, I suggested that the mental health worker be called in to counsel the family.

Later when I had time to reflect upon the incident, I realized I could have facilitated the teacher and parent getting together to talk, to share information, and to make a plan that could support the child. I assumed before I asked that the family would want to talk to a counselor. I missed an opportunity to serve the family and teacher with my core skill and experience.

By facilitating the process and asking more questions, I would have helped build the relationship between special education resource and center staff. Creating this kind of collaborative relationship to serve both children and families is an ongoing challenge."

Center Director
Preschool Special Education Teacher

Plans included introducing the special educator in the following ways:

- special meetings with child care staff to address questions about special education
- classroom visits with introductions to staff and children
- inclusion in regularly scheduled staff meetings
- participation in the care of children in the classrooms

The acceptance of special education personnel was enhanced when the special educators asked questions about the Center, clarified the role of special education and acknowledged the special expertise of the child care teachers.

ROLES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATOR IN THE CHILD CARE CENTER

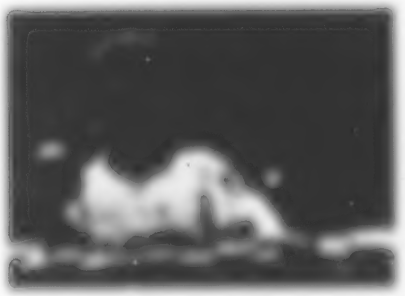
The roles of the special educator also varied according to individual Children's Center needs. The roles included the following:

- developing Individualized Education Plans with parents and staff
- facilitating the child's instructional goals and objectives
- modeling child-teacher interactions in the classroom for both children and staff
- bringing in materials and activities
- participating in staff meetings
- conducting parent meetings
- conducting requested staff development or in-service training
- serving as a consulting board for staff on issues and concerns relating to children, staff interactions and personnel issues
- introducing facilitating relationship based problem solving strategies in individual and group situations
- informing staff about special education services available to children with special needs
- coordinating special services i.e. transportation, assessments for special education students
- helping the child family in transition to kindergarten

IMPACT OF INTEGRATION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION INTO CHILDREN'S CENTERS

The placement of special education itinerant resource personnel into the Children's Centers was considered to be a sensitive issue that required increased staff communication and interdisciplinary team building. Traditionally, special education personnel were viewed as professionals who identified disabilities in child functioning and removed the child from the classroom in order to "fix them." They were viewed as having little understanding of the staffing and scheduling considerations necessary when operating a 12-hour child care program. Conversely, the child care staff labored under the opinion that they were viewed as mere "baby sitters" by many and not taken seriously in their ability to provide developmentally appropriate educational programs for young children.

The Infant and Preschool Special Education program emphasized the importance of staff members working together to identify child strengths and needs, focusing on adaptive capabilities and possibilities, and providing needed support for developmental progress within the context of the child's usual daily activities. It was clear that there was to address staff issues around child, family, and program issues needed to be considered.



"In the beginning staff would complain about children's challenging behavior. It was like they wanted me to 'fix it' make the problem go away. Now they are coming to me with different concerns like 'I think this is normal' or 'I need some advice. What resources might I use?'

I think they understand that I won't magically make things better, but often we put our heads together and do some problem solving or can come up with some strategies to make things better."

Project Specialist
Preschool Special Education Teacher

SEMINARS ON PROGRESS

When first learning to look at situations in a new way or implement unfamiliar solutions, the staff often feels confused. The staff who developed and learned to implement the relationship-based problem solving that became the cornerstone of Project Relationship recognized the need to take a periodic test step along the way and review the signposts that let them know they were heading in the right direction. They made ongoing changes which supported the development of young children with special needs and their families. Through this process, they were able to identify some benchmarks of the change process.

While each team that implemented Project Relationship was unique, common experiences in the change process were identified. The two teams approached learning the Project Relationship process in the same way as the same

[illegible] ... [illegible] ... [illegible] ... [

With the awareness came an increased interest in communicating with families and sharing experiences related to the child.

Overall, Project Relationship helped staff to create more nurturing and supportive child care settings. They came to believe that within these settings they could work together to help young children with special needs and their families succeed. They helped children grow and in the process they grew and changed themselves.

[illegible]

Over the course of Project Relationship the special education personnel experienced a change of roles. A summary of comments made by the special educators at start and included the following:

- "It's impossible to be fully prepared to take on the new role. It's a growth process."
- "One must be open to new ideas and be more non-judgmental."
- "You have to be willing to work in a setting where you are not in charge."
- "Skills to make relationships with other staff members are a must."
- "You need to learn to manage time better to be more self directed and self organized."
- "We must learn to empower other staff members to participate in the 'therapy' process for the child."

BENCHMARKS OF PROGRESS

- Principals and special education teachers reported an increase in child care staff's ability to make adaptations for individual children, taking into account each child's temperament, development and experiences.
- All principals indicated that they had seen other uses learned in ongoing staff development sessions being used with children in the classroom.
- Children's Centre staff members reported changes in their ability to generalize insights and strategies gained from a single case study to additional children.
- 80% of the staff in respect of the classroom as meetings very helpful.
- 95% of the staff felt meetings were successful in helping to solve day to day issues at the Centre.

- "I no longer know the left first. I have to be clear with her and it not from others."
- "I had to learn to do into the classroom even when I am not part of the planning process."
- "Gradually, as we got to know each other and learned to respect each other and learned to talk to each other as individuals, the staff began to warm up and they began to share on a deeper and deeper level."

Pinky

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Please Publishing wishes to acknowledge the many professionals from the Division of Special Education and the Division of Child Development for their support and creation and for building the collaborative relationships necessary to increase services for young children and their families.

DIVISION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

Brenda A. Watkins, Director
Melinda Rhoads, Administrative Coordinator (1982–1994)
Whitney M. Murphy, Coordinator

Special gratitude is extended to the members of the preschool special education classroom team for their combined talents and assistance in helping to develop, implement, and evaluate this model:

Anita Evans, Preschool Special Education Teacher
Ginger Hewell, Preschool Special Education Teacher
Ruth Hirsch, Speech and Language Specialist
Mildred Jackson, Speech and Language Specialist
Rosalind Jenkinson, Preschool Special Education Teacher
Cathy Sanders, Preschool Special Education Teacher
Jane Wade, Preschool Special Education Teacher
Abby Wasserman, Speech and Language Specialist
Sharon Wenzinski, Preschool Special Education Teacher
Carole Cassidy Whitlock, Preschool Special Education Teacher

DIVISION OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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[illegible] Principal

Special regard is extended to the staff at Morris Town Children's Center for their nursing duty nurses, caregivers, and human development specialists. Photo permissions of parents and cooperation during the filming of the videos are gratefully appreciated.

[illegible] Director of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Supervisor of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Assistant Professor
[illegible] Professor
[illegible] Assistant Principal
[illegible] Director of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Child Psychiatrist
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[illegible] Director of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Director of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Psychologist
[illegible] Director of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Director of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Consultant, Center Psychiatrist
[illegible] Director of Children's Center, Dean
[illegible] Administrative Officer, Manager

Psychiatrist

[illegible]

[illegible]

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[illegible]	[illegible]
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HANDOUTS

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HANDOUTS

The following section was taken from the text and is designed for duplication to share as handouts without cost. Acknowledgment of the source is requested.

Tracy

STRESSORS AFFECTING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Teenage parenthood
- Unsupported single parenthood
- Marital discord
- Incarcerated parents
- Psychiatric illness
- Overcrowding
- Social isolation
- Out of home separations
- An overwhelming cost of living
- Family substance abuse
- Gang activity
- Community violence
- Domestic violence

STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS MOST EFFECTIVE:

- when it is based on the collective knowledge and experiences of the staff rather than the knowledge of an outside expert

- when it is based on meeting the realistic problems that are encountered in the child care community

- when it occurs within the context of addressing one's beliefs and values, attitudes, goals, needs, and wants

- when it occurs within a climate that encourages free expression of ideas and honest feedback from the group

BUILDING AUTHENTIC STAFF RELATIONSHIPS REQUIRES:

- consistent meeting times on an ongoing basis
- administrative support for adult learning
- designated facilitators who value staff input
- a process of problem solving that encourages inquiry, respect, and reflection
- some manner of record keeping

EFFECTIVE FACILITATORS:

- listen.
- value staff input
- make observations
- ask open-ended questions
- model own humanness
- provide support
- make suggestions
- keep records public

PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

YOU KNOW YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY WHEN...

Markers of Progress with Staff Communication

There are several markers which define how well a staff is learning to use the relationship-based problem solving process:

- ❑ Staff members choose time, frequency, and schedule of meetings
- ❑ Staff members arrive on time for meetings
- ❑ Staff members set the agenda
- ❑ All staff members participate
- ❑ Discussion stems from staff-generated issues and is not based on administrative decisions
- ❑ Staff members share problems, feelings, and opinions
- ❑ Staff members voice a sense of ownership regarding the solution to Center problems
- ❑ Staff members listen to each other
- ❑ Staff members provide authentic feedback to each other
- ❑ Non-verbal cues are acknowledged
- ❑ Staff members begin to use common language, rituals, and "in-jokes."
- ❑ Discussion remains focused
- ❑ Conflict is recognized as a normal aspect of staff interaction and is addressed as an opportunity to exchange and clarify points of view
- ❑ Source of conflict is examined
- ❑ Staff members ask for clarification of messages that are unclear or that have double meanings
- ❑ Staff members express concerns in a constructive manner
- ❑ Facilitator role is shared by other members of the staff
- ❑ Problems are clearly defined
- ❑ Alternatives are explored
- ❑ Decisions are reached and supported
- ❑ Records are kept accurately
- ❑ Decisions are re-evaluated and modified if necessary

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"GOING AROUND THE CIRCLE"

This framework provides opportunity for staff to:

- focus on the issue
- take turns
- contribute their ideas
- listen to perspectives of others
- engage in problem solving

CHECKLIST FOR FACILITATORS

- ❑ Are meeting times predictable?

- ❑ Has a ritual been developed and followed for opening and closing the meeting?

- ❑ Have you remembered to ask more questions and make fewer statements?

- ❑ How was trust encouraged?

- ❑ How was the expertise of the staff validated?

- ❑ How was record keeping accomplished?

STRATEGIES USED BY STAFF TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- **CALENDAR**
  For special events, staff meetings, and teachers' work schedules that located where all staff can write on it
- **NOTES**
  For personal/private messages and greetings
- **COMMUNICATION BOOK**
  For documentation of important things staff coming to work need to know (illness, messages from families, activity schedule)
- **STAFF MEETINGS**
  For informal planning activities, discussions of children/families or for more formal presentations and planning of center-based activities.
- **CLIPBOARD**
  For alerting an administrator about the need for maintenance, information from parents, or events surrounding an incident that may require follow-up
- **STAFF MAILBOXES**
  For personal mail and announcements
- **SIGN IN**
  For notices to be slipped into time cards

PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

FACILITATOR TECHNIQUES TO ASSIST INQUIRY AND REFLECTION

There are several techniques that can help the facilitator serve as a model of effective communication and promote constructive communication among staff members.

- **SUPPORTING**
  Validates the importance of each individual's contribution.
  Example: "That's an interesting point. I haven't thought about it that way. You have such a nice way of saying things, Judy."

- **CLARIFYING**
  Helps check the accuracy and underlying message of a comment.
  Example: "I'm not certain I understand what you mean. Would you please go over that again? It sounds upsetting. How did you react when..."

- **QUESTIONING**
  Enhances dialogue when one feels direct answers are being requested or that comments given are ambiguous or incomplete.
  Example: "I hear you saying two things. Which is more important to you? Are you saying we shouldn't meet regularly because our schedules are too complicated or that you don't think it is worthwhile?"

- **REFOCUSING**
  Bringing a wide-ranging group discussion back to central issues.
  Example: "What as a group should we do? Addie, what are your thoughts on re-scheduling the meetings?"

- **TRANSITIONING**
  Assists in giving all members of the group an equal opportunity to participate when one member contributes more than the others.
  Example: "Your comments really made us think, Michael, and I wonder what others might like to add..."

- **SENDING I-MESSAGES**
  Provides a way to deal with a negative situation without accusing.
  Example: "I wonder how it feels when suggestions are ignored?"

- **RELATING**
  Allows staff to draw upon past experiences to solve or address present problems.
  Example: "How can our ritual of saying good-bye to the children apply to this situation of saying good-bye to a teacher leaving the school?"

- **CHECKING**
  Allows the opportunity for the needs of all group members to be heard.
  Example: "How are things going?" "Any ruffled feathers?"

- **SUMMARIZING**
  Pulls together related ideas and restates the suggestions that have been discussed.
  Example: "What ideas have we discussed about planning Tina's good-bye party?"

- **CONSENSUS REACHING**
  Allows for a "trial balloon" summarizing the group's discussion.
  Example: "It sounds like we have decided to use the 'Crossing the Bridge' ritual to say good-bye to Tina, just as we do for the children who are leaving. Is that correct?"

- **STORY TELLING:**
  Illustrates important points, triggers emotions, and personalizes experiences.
  Example: "I remember a time when..." or "Do you remember when...?"

COMPONENTS OF QUALITY CHILD CARE

- Care must be familiar, predictable,

  and personalized.

- Relationships must be nourished, respected,

  and sustained.

- Young children must be made to feel safe, valued,

  and competent.

FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE A CHILD'S BEHAVIOR INCLUDE:

- the child's general health, temperament, and developmental competency

- the quality of parent-child relationship

- the level of stress and support experienced by the family and the community in which the child is a member

THE TASKS OF TEACHERS ARE:

- to recognize and understand what the child is trying to communicate

- to modify adult expectations and environmental conditions that are not developmentally appropriate

- to assist the child in learning more adaptive ways to express oneself and cope with developmentally appropriate child care expectations and demands

TELLTALE SIGNS OF STRESS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

(Honig, 1986)

- Doesn't respond to friendly caregiver overtures
- Daydreams frequently
- Has grave, solemn face; rarely smiles or laughs
- Has frequent prolonged temper tantrums
- Cries a great deal for months after entry into group care
- Acts sullen and defiant
- Punishes self through slapping, head banging or calling self bad names
- Is overly sensitive to mild criticism
- Flinches if teacher or visiting adult approaches with caressing or reassuring gesture of out-stretched arm
- Reports proudly to teacher that he or she has hurt another child
- Is highly vigilant about others' misdeeds, tattles or jeers
- Is highly demanding of adults, although usually fairly self sufficient
- Bullies or scapegoats and may get other children to join in
- Carries out repetitive, stereotyped play that may have destructive aspects
- Clings to, shadows caregiver, although in group for months
- Is unable to carry out sustained play with preschool peers
- Has constant need to sleep, although physically well
- Is preoccupied with frightening images of monsters or other violent, threatening figures
- Has dull, vacant expression as if trying to ward off thinking about stressful trauma or tries to deny stressful feelings
- Is hyperactive or restless, wanders around room, touches and disturbs toys and games, can not settle into constructive play
- Displays disturbed bodily functions, has trouble with feeding, constipation, or diarrhea, soils self frequently months after toilet training is completed
- Has trembling of hands or facial twitches, although apparently well
- Talks compulsively about physical dangers
- Grinds teeth during nap time
- Has rigid facial expression from taut muscles
- Displays loss of perceptual acuity
- Displays reduced attention capacity; even though caregiver is very clear in communicating, the child cannot focus well on activity or request
- Stimulates self constantly (by prolonged thumb sucking, masturbation, rocking body back and forth, or other such behaviors), which children normally do occasionally for self comfort
- "Feels jittery"

Reprinted from: Reducing Stress in Young Children's Lives. Edited by J. B. McCracken

QUALITY ATTACHMENT

Quality attachment provides the child with a sense of safety from which she can:

- develop a sense of self
- explore her environment
- learn to modulate behavior
- practice emerging autonomy
- learn to play with other children
- become a symbolic thinker

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KEY QUESTIONS FOR INCREASING PERSONALIZED STAFF-TO-CHILD INTERACTIONS

(Project Relationship Staff, 1993)

Project Relationship Staff have identified the following key questions for increasing personalized staff-to-child interactions.

Temperament

- How does the child deal with routine transitions? How long did it take him to develop a pattern?
- How does the child deal with novel situations? On what factors does this depend?
- How does the child go about getting needs and wants met?
- How does the child react to success?
- How does the child soothe himself?
- When does the child have the best time? What does she like best?
- How does the child learn?

Development

- What are the child's developmental strengths and vulnerabilities?
- How might they be influencing the child's behavior?

Experience

- Where has the child lived and with whom since birth, i.e. what does her relationship time line with the primary caregiver look like?
- How has the child reacted to separations from or changes in caregivers?
- Does the child have brothers and sisters to whom he is attached? Who?
- Have there been critical factors in her caregiving environment that have reduced its responsiveness?
- How many transitions per day is the child making? How is she supported in these?

In this place

- Who among the staff does the child like?
- Who among the staff likes the child?
- How does the child react to failure?
- What friendships has the child formed? How?

DIFFICULTIES WITH SEPARATION

Early childhood teachers can help the child who is having difficulty separating by:

- acknowledging the child's feelings
- allowing the child to bring items from home (e.g., blanket, stuffed animals, favorite toys, picture of the family)
- previewing with the child how the day will be spent
- helping the child engage in a play activity
- reminding the child that mommy or daddy will return at a certain time (e.g., after puzzle time)

PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

WAYS TO HELP A CHILD AT NAP TIME

- Talk to parent about home rituals
- Read a book
- Rock to calm down
- Rub child's back
- Sing a song
- Play soft music
- Give the child a book
- Let the child use a special blanket
- Give the child a stuffed animal or a favorite toy

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HOW HAS YOUR CENTER PLANNED PERSONALIZED WAYS TO RELATE TO CHILDREN CONCERNING:

- the first day of school
- morning greetings
- sharing time
- snack time
- transitions of activities
- lunch time
- nap time
- national and religious holidays
- special birthdays and anniversaries
- family special events
- dealing with illness and death
- dealing with separation and loss
- departure/good-byes
- the last day of school

IDEAS ON GREETINGS AND DEPARTURES

(Developed by Children's Center Staff)

STAFF NEEDS TO:

- Individualize greetings and good-byes to each child
- Develop observation skills
- Know children well enough to determine when there are changes in children's behavior, mood or health
- Notice, acknowledge and keep each child safe on a daily basis
- Be aware that families have individual and acceptable rituals for greetings and departures
- Understand that departures or absences of adults and other children can have an impact on individual children
- Prepare children for arrival and departure of adults into the classroom
- Remember that the arrival of an adult into the classroom should not intrude on the child's space, time or need to work
- Make specific plans with parents regarding greetings and departures
- Engage parents on arrival, sharing information regarding Center schedules and daily activities
- Encourage parents to share significant child and family issues so that the staff can be more sensitive in making the day positive for the child
- Communicate the day's events at departure
- Assign a consistent person to be involved in arrivals and in departures to develop personalized relationships over time
- Communicate information about a difficult day in a sensitive manner.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

- What information should be shared at departure?
- Why should information be shared at departure?
- Under what conditions should information be shared?
- Who should be assigned to arrival time?
- Is each child greeted by name?
- Are the greeting and departure rituals personalized?

GUIDELINES TO HELP YOUNG CHILDREN AT RISK

(Adapted from Poulsen, 1996)

- Pay attention to the development of meaningful adult-child relationships.
- Acknowledge child's reality and accept feelings.
- Provide an environment that protects the child from emotional and physical overstimulation.
- Provide the child with opportunities to make choices, be self-dependent, and practice self-mastery.
- Proactively teach acceptable expressions of anger, fear, and frustration.
- Prepare and support the child for major and minor changes in daily routine.
- Proactively prompt social behaviors non-risk children learn incidentally, e.g., turn taking, peer conflict resolutions, and so on.
- Proactively coach problem solving strategies to reduce task and peer play frustration, e.g., visual scanning skills, trial and error approaches, persistence.

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PROJECT RELATIONSHIP